

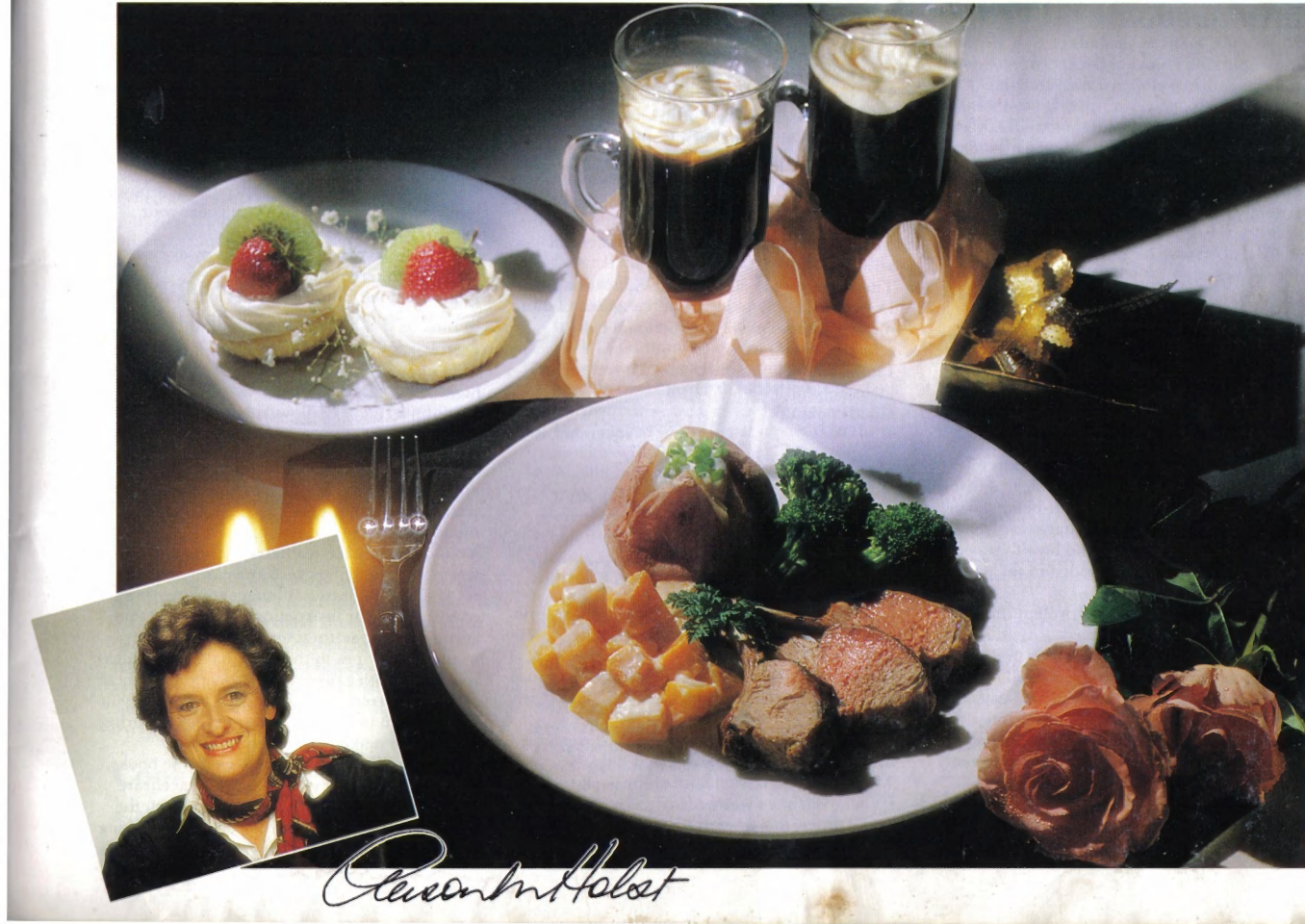


*Alison
Holst's*

MICROWAVE MENUS

BASED ON THE
TV SERIES

MICROWAVE MENUS



Clara Mitchell

Introduction

These days, many thousands of New Zealand households are enjoying the speed, economy and convenience of microwave cooking.

Unfortunately, however, quite a number of cooks do not realise the full potential of their microwave ovens, and are not using them as much as they could.

This book contains a selection of menus, carefully planned to fit in with different family situations. Each menu is made up of several recipes, all of which can be cooked in a microwave oven.

Of course you will not always want to prepare each menu exactly as I have, but seeing a complete menu can help to remind you of the different ways you can use your microwave, to help you get a meal on the table with less time, fuss and bother – and less washing up!

It is relatively easy to cook an isolated recipe, but the hardest thing for any cook to learn is how to cook several foods, and get them together on the table at the right time, to form a tasty, attractive and nutritionally well-balanced meal. For each menu, a 'Plan of Attack' is given, telling you where to start and how to proceed, and all the recipes are included in the pages following each menu.

To help you with your food presentation, each menu has been photographed.

Most New Zealanders, when they prepare a meal, cook part of it by conventional methods, and part in their microwave oven. I usually do, too. Of course you can modify these menus, cooking some of the recipes conventionally, if you like! My intention in this book is to show that it IS possible to cook delicious and attractive complete meals in a microwave oven. This is a book of menus, not a complete microwave manual giving you all the principles

of microwave cooking. For best results with your microwave, use this book after you have read a book explaining microwave principles, detailed instructions, and hints.

Some of the recipes used in this book are from my large *Alison Holst's New Microwave Cookbook*, some are modifications of my other recipes, and some are completely new.

I acknowledge the generous support of the Department of Education and the Dairy Advisory Bureau who, together with Television New Zealand, made possible the television series.

The Resources Division of the Education Department will make available videos of these microwave menus for instructional use to schools.

I hope you will find these menus, recipes and ideas helpful.

Good cooking!

November 1988



IMPORTANT NOTE

Cakes and baking can overcook in a short time in a microwave oven. Baking times vary.

Especially if you are baking in a covered pan, lifted slightly from the floor of your oven, you may find the cooking time is shorter than that suggested.

The first time you make a recipe, start checking after two-thirds of the suggested time.

Make sure you have modified the cooking time if your oven has a wattage higher than 650 watt, and if different names are given to power levels of 30%, 50% and 70% power.

Cooking Levels and Details

The wattage of domestic microwave ovens varies from 500 watts to 700 watts.

In most microwave ovens you can choose one of several different power levels when you cook.

Most of the time, you cook at Full power, that is 100% power. If you do not specify other power levels or instructions when you cook, your microwave oven will cook at this level.

The power levels on various microwave ovens are given different names.

I have used the following names for the different power levels used in the recipes in this book.

Full	100% power	650 watts
Medium-high	70% power	450 watts
Medium	50% power	350 watts
Defrost	30% power	220 watts

The percentages and wattages given are approximate only. My recipes were cooked and tested using a Toshiba E.R.7900 A/N 650 watt microwave oven.

Your oven may have different settings. Don't worry! This may be overcome easily, either by using slightly shorter or longer cooking times, or by using your instruction book to find the corresponding settings for your microwave oven. The recipes in this book have been tested in an oven with a turntable. If you prepare these recipes in an older oven without a turntable you may have to turn the food several times during cooking, to make sure it cooks evenly.

This book, like other microwave recipe books, cannot always give you precise and accurate cooking times because these vary. Watch the food carefully as it nears the end of the cooking time, remembering that it will continue to cook

after the oven is turned off.

Make a note of the time required, the dish used etc, so you have a guide the next time you use the same recipe.

When you can smell the food cooking in the microwave oven you know that it is nearly ready.

You should use Full power in microwave recipes where no power level is specified.

When a particular power level is specified at the start of a recipe you should use it for the rest of the recipe, unless otherwise instructed.

Standing Time

Food continues to cook after it is taken out of a microwave oven, e.g. a potato keeps baking for 1-2 minutes.

A roast continues to cook, and its internal temperature rises, for 10-15 minutes after it is taken from the oven.

The appearance and texture of the food change during this time...

- crumble toppings become crisper
- cabbage softens and brightens
- hamburgers and chicken get browner
- cake surfaces dry out

If you wait until food looks and feels cooked before you take it from the oven, you may well find that it is overcooked after standing. If in doubt, undercook. Take food out after the recommended time. You can always put it back in the oven if it is still undercooked after standing. It is much harder to render first aid to overcooked food!

Cooking Times Vary

- Machines with different wattage cook at different rates. The higher the wattage, the faster the food will cook.

- The higher the power level, the quicker the cooking will be. A cake, for example, will take about twice as long to cook at 50% power as it does to cook at 100% power, other things being equal.
- Initial temperature is important. Food from the refrigerator takes longer to cook than food from a warm room.
- Large amounts of food take longer to cook than small amounts of the same food.
- Small pieces of food cook more quickly than large pieces, so finely chopped food will cook faster than large chunks, even though the total weight is the same.
- The shape of the container affects the cooking time, e.g. a cake in a ring-shaped mould will cook faster than a cake in a round pan.
- Food which is covered during cooking usually cooks faster than the same food, uncovered.
- Food placed so the densest part is to the outside will cook faster.
- A solid item which is turned over part way through cooking will cook more quickly and evenly than an unturned one.

When the total cooking time is very short, cooking food for a minute longer than necessary will mean it is overcooked.

Because foods continue to cook after they are taken from the oven, you should try to stop cooking them just before they are completely cooked.

TO WARM PLATES.

Put wet paper towels between plates.

Heat the pile of plates and wet towels on Full power until the plates are hot, allowing 1/2-1 minute per plate.

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ALISON HOLST MICROWAVE MENUS

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What's for Breakfast?

How can your microwave help you cope with that difficult time of the day – after you crawl out of bed in the morning, and before you leave the house for the day?

It is important to have something to eat before you start on your day's activities.

You will feel better, do a better morning's work, and you won't need to dash out to buy food halfway through the morning.

Unless you have a very active morning ahead you will probably find that a shortened version of this menu is all that you need.

A bowl of muesli with fruit, served with milk or yoghurt, is a good breakfast in itself.

Or, you may settle for scrambled egg piled on a warmed, halved roll, and a piece of fruit.

Perhaps a bacon-filled roll and a cup of tea is exactly what you feel like for breakfast.

Or, you may thaw and warm a roll, spread it with butter and marmalade and swallow a quick glass of milk with it.

Whatever variation of this breakfast menu you choose, your microwave oven will help you to

- prepare it more quickly.
- have little mess to clean up afterwards.
- have a breakfast which is full of flavour.

BREAKFAST



Crunchy Muesli

Stewed Fruit
or
Raw Fruit

Scrambled Eggs

Bacon

Bread Rolls
Butter / Marmalade / Jam

Tea / Instant Coffee / Milk

Plan of Attack

Before you start cooking work out the order in which you should prepare and cook this meal.

1. Make Crunchy Muesli. You can make muesli whenever it suits you, because you can keep it in an airtight jar for several weeks, if necessary. (If it loses its crunch you can re-crisp it by spreading it on paper towels, microwaving it until it feels hot and letting it get cold before using it, or resealing it.)
2. Stew fruit (up to 2 days ahead). Cover, cool, and refrigerate stewed fruit until you need it. In cold weather, you can take the chill off the fruit by microwaving it before serving it. If you like to do this, store it in a microwave proof container. (Remember, when you serve fruit, raw instead of cooked, you use, and eat, little or no sugar.)
3. Soften butter to spreading consistency, if necessary.
4. "Freshen" marmalade or other jam, if necessary.
5. Cook the bacon and mix the scrambled eggs.
6. Cook the scrambled eggs during the bacon standing time.
7. Heat the bread rolls while the eggs stand.
8. Boil water for tea or instant coffee.

Notes: Set the table (or tray, etc.) in between various steps. Start to eat your cereal course anytime after (5) that suits you.



Crunchy Muesli

Microwaved muesli is easier to make, and less messy, than muesli made any other way. This recipe makes 7-8 cups of economical family muesli, but you can make additions and variations of your own, if you like. First you cook a syrup. Next you coat the uncooked cereals with the syrup. After this you cook the coated cereal until it is crisp.

*1/2 cup sugar
1/4 cup brown sugar
1/4 cup milk or water or fruit juice
1/4 cup corn or soya oil
1 tsp cinnamon
1 tsp mixed spice
1/2 tsp salt
4 cups whole-grain flaked oats
1 cup wheat bran or oat bran
1/2-1 cup wheatgerm*

1. Measure the first seven ingredients into a microwave-proof bowl.
2. Cook on Full power for 3 minutes, stirring after 1 and 2 minutes for most even cooking.
3. While syrup cooks, measure the flaked oats, bran and wheatgerm into a large (about 25cm) round, flat-bottomed microwave-proof pan which will not melt in contact with hot sugar. (If you do not have a large pan, cook mixture in two lots, in a smaller pan.)
4. Combine cereal and hot syrup (in either container) mixing to ensure all grains are coated and free from large, sugary lumps (which may burn).
5. Spread mixture evenly, so it is not more than 3cm thick.
6. Microwave on Full power for 6 minutes, then cook longer, stirring every minute, until the mixture looks browner, the grains appear drier and more separate, and the muesli has a nice cooked smell.

7. When cold, store in an airtight container.

Notes: The first time you make this recipe, time it carefully, writing down the exact cooking times needed for your microwave oven, cooking container etc. If you intend making this recipe often, it is worth buying a large flat-bottomed container large enough to fit on your turntable. Undercooked muesli will be sticky, and light in colour. Overcooked muesli will be dark in colour, and slightly bitter in flavour.

Variations: Replace 1 cup flaked oats with any other flaked cereal. Replace white sugar with 1/4 cup honey; add 1/2 cup coconut to cereal; add 1/4 cup toasted sesame seeds to cereal; stir in lightly roasted nuts and/or (chopped) dried or candied fruit to the hot, cooked muesli.

Stewed Fruit

- Fruit stewed in the microwave oven has very good flavour, texture and colour, when cooked to the right stage.
- Because they do not need to be surrounded by water, or syrup to cook evenly, the pieces of fruit may be cooked using very little, or no extra liquid, intensifying flavour and colour.
- For most even cooking, cover the containers used for cooking fruit.
- When cooking fairly small quantities, put the pieces of fruit in a ring pan, or a pan with a central cone insert, for even cooking.
- When cooking large amounts (in large round covered containers) stir the pieces gently during cooking so that the slower cooking pieces in the centre are moved to fast cooking areas near the sides of the container.
- To stop delicate fruits from mushing, cook them at Defrost (30% power) or Medium (50% power) for about two or three times as long as they take at Full power.

- Experiment with different methods, to see what you like best with fruit you cook most frequently.
- Many fruits cook well when prepared as for conventional stewing, sprinkled with sugar (or layers of fruit sprinkled with layers of sugar covered and cooked with no added liquid).
- When cooking fruit which discolours quickly, cook a small amount of sugar and water first, to form a syrup, add a little lemon juice if desired, then add the pieces of fruit, turning them to coat them with syrup.
- Cook fruit which is to be puréed later, without any added sugar.
- To cook tamarillos without peeling them, cut off the stem ends, then halve them lengthwise. Arrange the halves, cut side down on a mixture of brown or white sugar, and any citrus fruit juice. Cook on Full power until the skins rise and may be lifted away from the fruit.

Scrambled Eggs

Scrambled eggs are easier to microwave than most other egg dishes. Microwaved scrambled eggs do not stick or burn on the bottom, and do not have to be stirred all the time, as they cook. Scrambled eggs cook most evenly in a container which is not too wide or too deep. For example, a two egg mixture cooks well in a 2-cup glass measure. To cut dishwashing to a minimum, cook an individual (1-2 eggs) serving of scrambled eggs in a small bowl with fairly low sides, in which the eggs may be mixed, cooked and served. What's more, you can stir the eggs, when partly cooked, with the same fork you will eat them with later. If you like, melt a teaspoon of butter, or bacon fat, in the container in which you will cook your egg(s), or you may use no added fat at all.

1 serving:

1 egg

2 Tbsp milk

pinch salt (if no butter or bacon fat used)

finely chopped fresh herbs (optional)

1/2 tomato, cubed finely (optional)

1. Break the egg (into the melted butter if used) into the glass measuring cup (or other container).
2. Add the milk and beat with a fork, only long enough to combine. Add any other desired additions and stir to mix.
3. Cook on Full power for 30 seconds, stir, then cook for 30-45 seconds more until you see the volume increase. Stir gently, then leave to stand for 1 minute to finish cooking, to become firmer. If egg is not firm enough, cook for a little longer.

For larger quantities

2 eggs and 1/4 cup milk cook in 2-3 minutes.

4 eggs and 1/2 cup milk cook in about 4 minutes.

Bacon

It is very convenient to microwave bacon. It cooks very well, in a short time. Try different methods of microwave bacon cookery. The cooking time will be about the same, whatever method you use.

Allow 1-1 1/2 minutes per slice of bacon, on Full power.

The exact time depends on the thickness, size, and leanness of the bacon.

Bacon becomes browner in the 2 minutes after it has cooked (standing time).

Plate Method

Cook 1 or 2 slices of bacon on the plate (without metal trim) on which you will eat it. Lie bacon in a circular shape, if practical, and cover the bacon and plate loosely with a paper towel to spread the heat and absorb any fat splatters.

Ridged Plate or Rack Method

Lie several slices of bacon on a ridged roasting rack so that fat can drip away from bacon as it cooks. Cover lightly with a paper towel, as above.

Between Paper Towels

This method works best for fairly streaky bacon, since the lean part of meaty bacon may stick to the towel as it cooks.

Place bacon between two layers of folded paper towel. The towel absorbs fat from bacon as it cooks. No plate is dirtied, but bacon fat cannot be saved.

Tip: Bacon which is hard to separate from other slices will pull away much more easily if the pack of bacon (with no metal trim) is microwaved briefly, until bacon is slightly warmed. Bacon which is not to be cooked may be replaced in refrigerator.

Warming Bread Rolls

Bread rolls have a nicer aroma and texture if they are served warm.

Hard, stale rolls will appear to be fresher too, as long as they are eaten soon after warming.

Rolls should be heated at Full power until they feel only slightly warm since they will be warmer inside, when broken open.

6 bread rolls warm at Full power in about 15 seconds.

10 bread rolls warm at Full power in about 30 seconds.

Wrap single rolls in a paper towel or serviette to warm them. You can warm several rolls in a basket (with no metal fasteners or staples) which has been lined with a paper serviette or towel. For best results cover rolls in basket with another serviette or towel.

To thaw a bread roll

Wrap in a paper serviette or towel. Microwave at Defrost (30% power) for about one second, depending on size or density.

Softening Butter

Place about 100g unwrapped butter from refrigerator on a butter dish without metallic trim. Microwave on Medium (50% power) for 10-15 seconds or until slightly soft. Butter will soften more on standing.

Note: If you use semi-soft butter, kept in a cool cupboard (rather than the refrigerator) between meals, softening should not be necessary.

Refreshing Jams

Marmalade and jam, which has been left to dry on the sides or bottom of the jar, may be refreshed in the microwave.

Add about 1 Tbsp of compatibly flavoured fruit juice (or water) to 1/4 cup jam, and heat the uncovered jar at Full power until it bubbles vigorously. (If overheated it may boil over.) Remove jar from microwave with a protective cloth or paper towel, since jar may be very hot, scrape down sides of jar, stir to mix, then leave to cool and set again. Serve as required.

Tea and Instant Coffee

It is considerably quicker to heat the water for one cup of tea or instant coffee in the microwave oven than it is to heat it in an electric jug.

Fill the cup or mug with tap water and heat it at Full power until the water boils. This will take from 30 seconds to 3 minutes, depending on the size of the mug, and the initial temperature of the water.

Remove from the oven and add the teabag or instant coffee.

Notes: Finely powdered instant coffee may froth when stirred into very hot water. It pays to be prepared for this. You can also successfully reheat a cup of tea or coffee which has cooled down, as long as you do not overheat it and alter the flavour of added milk by boiling it.

Weekend Breakfast

For many of us, the weekend brings a change in our normal weekday routine. It's a good feeling to be able to wake up, look at the clock, then roll over and go back to sleep again.

When we decide that it is time to get up, most of us are feeling decidedly hungry. Because there isn't a deadline for our weekend breakfast, we have time to potter around in the kitchen, preparing food that there isn't time to make on weekdays.

With your microwave oven to help you, it is possible to make this menu very quickly, with the minimum of mess.

I make the foods on this menu because I like their flavours and textures, but it is nice to know that these are foods that are high in fibre and vitamins as well.

You may decide that you would like to make yourself a glass of juice and a quick plate of porridge as soon as you "hit the kitchen", then make the muffins to eat with a mid-morning coffee.

Or, you may choose to prepare only juice and muffins, or muffins and a hot drink, especially if you have stayed in bed for rather a long time!

WEEKEND BREAKFAST



Tomato Juice
or
Mixed Vegetable Juice
or
Orange Juice

Plain Porridge
or
Mixed Grain Porridge
or
Flavoured Porridge

Fruited Bran Muffins

Cream Cheese / Honey or Jam

Coffee / Hot Milky Drink

Plan of Attack

In microwave meal preparation, just as for a conventional meal, you need to work out the order in which you will prepare and cook different dishes.

1. Make the Tomato Juice or Mixed Vegetable Juice first (preferably the day before) because you want to serve it cold.
2. Warm the citrus fruit that you will later squeeze for juice.
3. Make and cook the Fruited Bran Muffins at least five minutes before you eat them because they need this time to firm up, and for their outsides to dry out nicely.
4. While your muffins cook, think about a suitable spread for your muffins. Soften cream cheese to spreading consistency in the microwave, or whip in a food processor with a little milk, if you like it light and fluffy.
5. Freshen up jam or soften honey for a muffin topping, if necessary.
6. Put out the ingredients so that anyone who wants porridge can make it for themselves when they are ready. Mix and make your own porridge. Squeeze juice if this has not been done in between other steps.
7. Assemble drink-making ingredients, putting what you want for your own drink into a mug ready for microwaving, and leaving things ready for other people to help themselves.



Tomato Juice

During the tomato season I use ripe red, but less than perfect, tomatoes from my garden to make this tomato juice.

About 1 litre:

about 1 kg tomatoes, quartered
1 onion or 2 spring onions, finely chopped
2 tsp sugar
1 tsp salt
1/2 tsp celery salt (optional)
fresh or dried basil and/or parsley to taste
1/4-1/2 slice white or wholegrain bread

1. Put the prepared tomatoes and onions in a covered 2 litre microwave dish. Add the seasonings, altering the herbs, and adding pepper if you like. Break the bread (or toast) into small pieces and add.
2. Cook at Full power for 10 minutes, or until tomatoes are pulpy.
3. For greatest yield, purée in a food processor.
4. Shake mixture through a sieve, discarding the solids.
5. Chill, taste and sharpen with a little lemon juice or wine vinegar if necessary. Add Worcestershire or Tabasco sauce if desired. Chill, or pour over ice-cubes to cool it down quickly.

Note: Refrigerate juice for 2-3 days if desired. This mixture is not suitable for bottling, but may be frozen or dehydrated.

Mixed Vegetable Juice

You can count the number of vegetables you use in the preparation of this juice, and name it accordingly – V7, V8, V9, V10, etc! The beetroot gives it a wonderful bright red colour. However, the main vegetables used for this juice are tomatoes and carrots. Use this recipe as a guide, changing vegetables and amounts to suit yourself.

About 1 1/4 litres:

1 kg tomatoes, quartered
1-2 cups grated carrots
1/2-1 cup finely sliced celery
1 small beetroot, grated
1 red or green pepper, chopped
1 cup thinly sliced greens (e.g. silverbeet, lettuce, parsley, watercress)
1 1/2 tsp salt
1/4-1/2 slice white or wholemeal bread

1. Combine all ingredients in a covered 2-3 litre microwave dish (as for tomato juice).
2. Cover and microwave at Full power for 20 minutes, or until all vegetables are mushy.
3. Purée mixture in a food processor, if possible. Shake through sieve, then season and serve as for tomato juice.

Juice from Citrus Fruit

Microwave citrus fruit, such as tangelos, oranges, mandarins, goldfruit, lemons, etc. before you squeeze them, for easier juicing and a greater yield of juice.

The time needed varies with the size of the fruit, e.g. 20 seconds for a medium-sized lemon and 30 seconds for an orange.

Leave fruit to stand for several minutes after microwaving, then roll firmly on a smooth surface, before halving and juicing them. Sweeten slightly and dilute, if necessary. Serve soon after squeezing.

Hot Breakfast Cereals

If you like porridge but hate soaking and washing a porridge pot, you'll find that your worries are over with microwaved porridge. Make and serve the porridge in the same bowl. Choose a bowl that will be only half-filled by the quantity of cereal you mix. This leaves room for bubbling during cooking. Choose a fairly deep bowl rather than a wide shallow one. If the porridge in your favourite plate boils over in the microwave oven, add boiling water to the

uncooked cereal, then cook it at Medium (50% power), until the cereal in the middle of the plate has heated through and changed colour. Unless you have a large family, all wanting their cereal at the same time, make the porridge in separate plates. Different types of porridge require slightly different amounts of liquid. Start with these proportions and change them until you have your porridge exactly the way you like it.

Try different porridges for variety.

Plain Porridge

1 serving:

4 Tbsp (1/4 cup) rolled oats
pinch of salt
8 Tbsp (1/2 cup) water

1. Measure the rolled oats into the plate and add the salt.
2. Add hot water if available (for a shorter cooking time).
3. Microwave at Full power for 1-1 1/2 minutes, then stir and cook until the porridge in the middle of the plate looks cooked, for another 1/2-2 minutes, depending on the temperature of the added water.

Mixed Grain Porridge

Use whatever proportions of different cereals you like.

1 large serving:

<i>3 Tbsp rolled oats</i>	<i>1 Tbsp kibbled rye</i>
<i>1 Tbsp wheat or oat bran</i>	<i>pinch of salt</i>
<i>1 Tbsp wheatgerm</i>	<i>12 Tbsp (3/4 cup) water</i>

Use same method as for plain porridge. If there is a possibility of porridge boiling over, add boiling water, and cook at Medium (50% power) for 2 minutes, then stir and cook for 2 minutes longer.

Note: Add extra hot water near the end of the cooking time if porridge looks too thick.

Flavoured Porridge

You can add dried fruits, nuts and spices to porridge, in quantities to suit yourself, too. Experiment with chopped dates, dried apricots, dried apples, sultanas, ground toasted sesame seeds, cinnamon, mixed spice etc. Try the sachets of flavoured (and plain) individual porridge servings.

Serving Porridge

Serve porridge with different toppings for variety. Try plain or flavoured yoghurt, unsweetened evaporated milk, and occasionally cream. Try sliced bananas and other fresh fruit as a topping to your porridge.

Fruited Bran Muffins

The fruit in these muffins keeps them moist. Unlike most microwaved muffins they do not dry out and are good served even a couple of days later.

I make 8 large muffins in individual glass ramekins which have been lightly brushed or rubbed with any type of butter, e.g. unsalted, cultured, standard creamy or semi-soft. If preferred, make about 12 smaller muffins in solid bottomed microwave muffin pans.

For 8-12 muffins:

25g butter	1/4 cup rolled oats
1/4 cup treacle	1/2 cup flour
1 egg	1/2 tsp baking soda
1/2 cup milk	1 chopped or grated apple,
1 cup bran	banana, pear or
1/4 cup wheatgerm	2 feijoa (unpeeled)

1. Melt the butter until just liquid in a fairly large microwave-proof mixing bowl.
2. Add the treacle, heat until the treacle is liquid, then stir to mix the butter and treacle.
3. Break in the egg, add the milk, and stir together with a fork.
4. Without mixing, tip in the bran, wheatgerm, rolled oats, and the flour and soda which have been sieved together. Add the finely chopped or

grated fruit (unpeeled if possible).

5. Fold ingredients together, just enough to combine. Depending on fruit texture, add a little flour or milk to get a fairly firm muffin texture if necessary.

6. Spoon into ramekins, so each is half to three-quarters full and each muffin has a rounded top.

7. Stand ramekins on an upturned plate so they are elevated. Cook muffins, four at a time at Full power, for about 2-2½ minutes, or until the muffins spring back when touched in the middle and they look dry around the edges.

8. Leave to stand for 1 minute, turn out and stand for 3-4 minutes longer. During this time they become firmer around the edges. Serve warm or reheated.

Soften Cream Cheese

Cream cheese for spreading should be softened to the consistency of creamed butter. Warm it in its carton, and remove what you need for table use. Loosen the lid and remove all foil, if present. Heat a 225g carton at Medium (50% power) for 1½-2 minutes or at Full power for 45-60 seconds. Mix well with a fork, then use.

Variation: Flavour cream cheese with finely grated orange, mandarin or tangelo rind.

Soften or Liquify Honey

Remove metal lid from jar of honey. Microwave on Full power for 30 seconds, then stir, and heat in 15-second bursts, until honey is as soft as you like it.

Do not let honey bubble around the edges, or boil.

Refreshing and Resealing Jam

Half-full jars of jam with metal tops may be re-boiled then resealed, if desired. The jars may then be stored at room temperature until they

are needed again.

Remove metal lid and leave to stand in boiling water. Wipe top of jar clean, and add 1-2 Tbsp liquid if surface is dry or crystalline. Reheat at Full power until half (or less) full jar bubbles and boils. Watch carefully since this happens quickly and jam will boil over if overheated. Remove from microwave oven with protective cloth or glove, stir briefly, then remove lid from hot water and screw it on firmly.

Hot Milky Drinks

Everybody in the family can mix their own milky drink, exactly as he/she likes it, then reheat it to drinking temperature. Use microwave-proof mugs or cups for warming up drinks. Here are some examples of possible combinations:

1/2 mug leftover coffee	1/2 tsp instant coffee
1/2 mug milk or	1-2 tsp Milo powder
	1/2 mug water
1-2 tsp Milo powder	1/2 mug milk or
3/4 mug hot tap or cold water	
1/4 mug milk or	1 mug milk
	1/2-1 tsp sugar or honey
1 tsp instant coffee powder	grated nutmeg
1/4 mug water	
3/4 mug milk or	

Experiment using homogenized milk or Trim milk, in different proportions, adding flavourings as desired.

For easiest reheating, heat 1 mug or cup at a time, at Full power. Stand it on a paper serviette or towel to prevent spills or boil-overs.

Make a mental note of the exact time it takes to heat the drink to the drinking temperature you like.

The time will vary from ½-3 minutes, depending on size of cup or mug, initial temperature of liquid, proportion of milk, the amount of cream in the milk, etc.

For best flavour, and to prevent boil-overs, do not reheat to boiling point (you cannot drink it this hot, anyway).

Weekend Snacks

This menu is a little different from the other menus in this series and book.

It is the sort of list that the “food buyer and organiser” of a family might fasten on the refrigerator door, so that everyone in the family who wants to make a snack knows what is available.

One of the really good things about a microwave oven is that it makes the preparing, heating and serving of precooked and partly cooked foods so easy.

This means that “beginner-cook” family members, who do not normally cook for themselves, can prepare quick and easy food, without the danger of burning the food or pots, and without leaving a mess for someone else to clean up.

Assembling and cooking snacks like these for yourself really saves money.

Remember these important facts when microwaving:

- For most even cooking, wrap or cover foods.
- Food heated from room temperature takes a shorter time than cold food does.
- For greatest speed, it often pays to use your microwave alongside other appliances, such as an electric jug or toaster.
- Overheating and overcooking cause:
 - boil-overs.
 - cheese “disappearing” – that is, melting and running off food.
 - bread and baked foods drying out and toughening.
- As a general rule, don’t put metal containers in the microwave oven.
- Read the instructions on pre-packaged bought foods before you start, since many now have microwave cooking instructions.

WEEKEND SNACKS



Soup
with
Croutons or Crisp Bread

Cheesy Snacks and Savouries

Spaghetti
or
Baked Beans on Toast

Hot Dogs

Pita Bread Pockets

Hot Meat Sandwiches

Plan of Attack

For snack foods like those listed here you do not need a definite working timetable because you are not likely to be preparing all of them to serve at once.

You are more likely to choose one, or two, of these foods which you will probably heat just before you need them.

Common sense and basic rules apply.

Get out all the ingredients you are likely to need before you start.

If you are preparing two things such as soup and a bread-based snack, decide whether you will have time to prepare the second while the first is heating, or whether it is better to prepare them both before you heat the first, which is often a good idea. You can then keep an eye on the microwave oven while your food heats, putting away the ingredients you have used, and cleaning up, so by the time you start to eat, the kitchen is cleared and you can leave it more or less as you found it.

Note for food organisers:

It is a good idea to have an area in your kitchen where you keep a supply of disposable cooking and serving containers such as paper plates (of different shapes and sizes), paper cups, paper towels, paper serviettes, saved supermarket polystyrene containers etc., takeaway plastic knives, disposable table placemats. Using a combination of especially bought, saved and recycled containers from supermarkets and takeaways, it is possible to set an attractive table where everything can be thrown out after use.



Hot Soup

Reheating soup from the refrigerator.

Soup from a covered container in the refrigerator may be reheated easily and quickly. Stir the soup well. Depending on the type of soup, it may have jelled in the cold, or may have thicker parts, and small pieces of food at the bottom of the container.

Fill a mug or soup bowl so that it is no more than two-thirds full. (Don't use a very wide shallow soup bowl.) Stand it on a folded paper towel or serviette, on a plate if you like, and heat, not until boiling, but until soup is drinking temperature, stirring it several times for most even heating. It should take about 3 minutes per 250ml cup.

Making soup from a can.

Read the can instructions for diluting the soup. Pour into your mug about a third of a can of (well stirred or shaken) soup, then dilute it with hot or cold tap water, as instructed. Heat to drinking temperature, add milk if required, and heat again. Heating time will be shorter than for refrigerated soup, and will depend on the temperature of the water you used.

For "1 serving" packet soups read the packet instructions. Pour the required amount of hot (tap) water over the soup and heat it in the microwave until it is of the required temperature stirring several times. The soup will not need to boil in its container.

For packet soups for several servings it is usually easiest to make up the whole packet in a microwave-proof casserole bowl, or wide measuring jug, then serve what you need. With experience you may use part of the powder only, and cook this in a small container, but this can be a bit fiddly. These packet soups must be boiled, not just heated to drinking temperature.

Soup Accompaniments

You may decide to make toast in a toaster while you microwave your soup. You can, however make crisp bread products in your microwave.

Croutons

*1 cup 5mm bread cubes
2 Tbsp butter
1/4 tsp garlic salt
paprika and curry powder*

1. Cut the (preferably stale) bread into small cubes, without removing the crusts.
2. Melt the butter in a flat-bottomed dish (on Full power) for about 45 seconds. Toss the bread cubes in the melted butter.
3. Sprinkle with the seasonings.
4. Microwave, uncovered for 3-4 minutes or until croutons brown slightly.
5. Remove the ones that brown first, then cook the rest a little longer, if you like.
6. Stand croutons on a paper towel for 5 minutes to become crisp.

Crisp Bread Slices

*1 Tbsp soft butter
1/8 tsp garlic salt
1/8 tsp paprika
1/8 tsp curry powder
about 6 thin slices french bread
or 2 slices bread*

For ease and no mess, make the spread on a paper plate with a rubber spatula.

1. Soften, but do melt the butter and mash with the seasonings.
2. Spread mixture thinly, covering the whole surface of thin slices cut diagonally from bread rolls or french bread; or spread on sliced bread, then cut each slice in quarters.
3. Place the buttered bread on a folded paper serviette or towel, or on a ridged microwave dish.

4. Microwave at Full power until the bread starts to darken slightly, about 15 seconds per slice (or quarter). Leave to stand for 1-2 minutes.

Cheese Savouries

These are wonderful microwave standbys.

Most cheeses microwave very well, softening deliciously and developing even more flavour. It is worth trying different cheese varieties after you become an expert cooking with cheddar.

e.g. Edam – which is low in fat
Gruyère – which is low in salt
Gouda – with a very mild flavour
Mozzarella – with a special stringy texture when heated, and which is also low in fat.

For savouries made with minimum of mess and maximum convenience, cook with cheese which you buy pre-grated e.g. mild and tasty cheddar, and mozzarella.

Cheese on Crackers

1. Arrange a ring of crackers on a round plate, on which you will serve them, or in a circle on a paper towel.
2. Top each cracker with the cheese of your choice, and a garnish. Put on the garnish before or after the cheese, depending on its texture, and appearance.

e.g. tomato slices paprika
green/red pepper chopped parsley
chutney, etc fresh/dry herbs
spring onion mushrooms
olives onion rings
salami/bacon creamed corn

3. Microwave on Full power, just until the cheese starts to soften. Allow 1/2-3 minutes depending on amount of food.

Important: If you overheat the savouries the cheese will disappear off the crackers completely.

4. Stand 1-2 minutes before serving.

Hot Bubbly Cheese Savouries

*2 bread rolls
1 egg
1 slice bacon, chopped
1 tomato, chopped
1 spring onion, chopped
3/4 cup grated tasty cheese*

1. Halve bread rolls and cut or scoop out some of their centres to leave cavities ready for filling.
2. Measure remaining ingredients into a plate or bowl and mix with a fork to combine.
3. Divide mixture between four halves. Arrange rolls equally distant from the centre on a ridged dish or folded paper towels.
4. Microwave on Full power until cheese starts to melt, about 1 1/2-2 minutes.

Spaghetti or Baked Beans on Toast

You can heat spaghetti or baked beans on the plate on which you will eat it.

1. Make and butter a piece of toast, and place it on a plate.
2. Top with beans or spaghetti straight from the can.
3. Cover loosely with a paper towel to prevent splattering.
4. Microwave at Full power for about 1 1/2 minutes. Time depends on amount and initial temperature. When fairly hot, top with grated cheese if desired. Reheat until cheese melts.

Hot Dogs

1. Spread a split roll with the flavourings you want, e.g. mixed mustard, relish, grated cheese, tomato sauce.
2. Put the saveloy or frankfurter in the split roll with the seasonings.
3. Wrap firmly in a paper towel or serviette, to hold everything in place and stop the bread going soggy.
4. Microwave at Full power for 45-90 seconds, until meat is hot, and bread is warm.

Alternative method:

1. Place frankfurters or saveloys in a covered casserole with 2-3 Tbsp water per frankfurter etc.
2. Heat at Full power, allowing about 45 seconds per item. Time will vary with size and fat content. Take care not to overheat.
3. Proceed as above, allowing only about 20 seconds for heating when fully assembled.

Pita Bread Pockets

Pita or pocket breads make excellent edible containers for mixtures of raw or cooked foods.

1. Halve pocket breads and sprinkle each with a few drops of water if they appear to be dry. Wrap in a paper towel or slip into an oven bag. Microwave briefly to warm bread (so they split open more easily) but do not let them dry out.
2. Make any filling mixture you like, adding finely chopped or grated cheese for extra flavour and to hold filling together when heated. Pile into pockets.
3. Prop several paper serviette-wrapped pockets so they are upright, in a basket or deep plate.
4. Microwave on Full power, until cheese softens.

Filling suggestions: cooked mince, or dried bean mixtures, cooked rice, macaroni or cracked wheat, mushrooms, onions, tomatoes, beansprouts, carrot, cabbage, green/red pepper, corn, relishes, herbs, luncheon sausage.

Hot Meat Sandwiches

A sandwich like this is a delicious way to serve leftover cold meat or poultry. With a salad, one of these makes a complete meal.

1 serving:

*1 crusty bread roll or bagel
mayonnaise or butter
1-2 slices roast, corned beef, chicken or other cold meat
gravy (optional)
1 Tbsp mild mixed mustard
1 Tbsp relish or tomato sauce*

1. Split the bread roll (not quite all the way through) and spread the cut surface with mayonnaise or butter.
2. Slice, chop or fold the meat, adding a little leftover gravy if desired. Place the meat in the roll.
3. Add mustard and relish, tomato sauce, etc. Fold a paper towel around the roll.
4. Heat on Full power for 30 seconds or until meat is hot and roll is warm.

Note: If meat is dry, spread with relish before placing in roll.

Homemade Takeaways

What's on our Microwave Menu today?

This menu is made up of homemade versions of three foods that you often buy as takeaways. When you realise how easy, and how quick it is to prepare these foods in a microwave oven, you may decide that you will sometimes make them yourself, rather than buying them.

Although it may seem that takeaways involve you in no time at all, you should work out, sometime, exactly how long it takes to:

1. Get yourself to the takeaway outlet.
2. Wait in the queue for your food.
3. Take your food to the place where you will eat it.

You may find that it is actually quicker to go into the kitchen with your friends, and assemble and cook similar foods in your microwave. Certainly, if you work out how much the ingredients cost you, then compare this with the price of the takeaway, you will find that it really pays you to make your own.

What's more, you can make sure that the quality of the ingredients is high and the fillings generous. You can include plenty of freshly-prepared fruit and vegetables so your homemade takeaways are well balanced nutritionally.

Each of these hamburgers contains a juicy generous-sized meat patty with cheese for extra flavour, and vitamin C-rich vegetables. The pizza has plenty of cheese with a variety of vegetables and other ingredients. The muesli bars have an especially good flavour and extra crunch because they are so fresh.

With ripe fruit to finish off, you are using a natural "fast food" – you just pick it off the fruit bowl and eat it – and you can't get anything faster or easier than that, can you!

HOMEMADE TAKEAWAYS



Hasty Hamburgers

—

Pronto Pizza

—

Salad or Raw Vegetable Strips

—

Munchy Muesli Bars

—

Yoghurt, Milk, Flavoured Milk,
Milkshake or Fruit Juice

—

Raw Fruit

Plan of Attack

You may well decide to make only one of these foods for a snack for yourself. On the other hand, if you are feeding a group of people you may decide to make all these foods, and serve them as a meal.

Foods like these can be eaten indoors or out. If the weather is fine, consider taking your homemade fast food outside to eat on the patio, or in the garden. There are many advantages in doing this. If anyone spills drinks, or drops blobs of melted cheese or tomato sauce, or if they leave crumbs behind it doesn't matter if you are outside, on grass or a wooden deck. If you serve your food on paper plates, with paper serviettes and towels, and throw-away cups, you won't have any washing up to think about later. What's more, food always seems to taste better if you eat outside.

If you are making only one of these foods you won't need a workplan – just

- Read through the recipe.
- Get out all the ingredients.
- Start mixing and cooking.

It pays to get out all the ingredients first, because it is disappointing to find that you don't have something vital when you are half way through mixing.

If you are going to make all these foods follow this order:

1. Start with the muesli bars, as these are served cold and need a few minutes to cool and harden.
2. Next make the pizza, because it can be reheated easily.

3. Make the hamburgers last. You can warm the bread rolls and assemble relishes etc. during their standing time.

In between 1, 2 and 3 you can cut up vegetables or make a salad, get drinks ready, polish and arrange raw fruit, and assemble the things you will need to serve your food.



Hasty Hamburgers

This amount of mixture makes two large hamburger patties, each containing 125gm of minced beef. You can make three smaller (about 85gm) patties from the same amount of mixture if you like.

1/2 slice toast bread
1/2 tsp dark soya sauce
1 1/2 tsp tomato ketchup (sauce)
1 spring onion, chopped
1/2 tsp instant beef stock
250g minced beef

1. a) If a food processor or blender is available, break the bread into small pieces and process until evenly crumbed, then add all other ingredients and combine until evenly mixed.

1. b) Without a food processor break the bread into small pieces and leave them to stand in the soya sauce and ketchup for a few minutes. Add the chopped onion and powdered stock, and mash everything together with a fork. Lastly add the meat broken into smaller pieces. Mix again until well mixed.

2. Shape into two or three patties with wet hands.

3. Brush the top and sides of each patty with a little extra soya sauce. Cover prepared patties and refrigerate until required, if desired.

4. a) To cook, place patties so they are equidistant (on a paper plate if desired). Cover loosely with a paper towel (for even cooking). Cook on Full power for 2 minutes. Turn patties over, and cook 2 minutes longer, or to desired stage. Leave to stand for 2 minutes, before serving in warmed bun.

4. b) **To cook in a browning dish:** Heat empty browning dish for 6 minutes at Full power, or according to manufacturer's instructions. Cook

burgers for 2 minutes then turn and cook for 1-2 minutes longer until they are no longer red in the centre.

While your burgers stand, halve 2-3 rolls, wrap in paper towels and heat for 20-30 seconds, or until bread is warm.

Spread bread with chutney, tomato ketchup, relish or mild mustard according to taste. Next put a lettuce leaf or other salad greens. Add sliced green and red pepper rings and/or tomato. Put the hot patty on this and top with a square of cheese. Garnish with cucumber, pickle, gherkin etc., if desired.

Just before eating, heat up each assembled hamburger briefly, if it has cooled down since it has been made. (The meat patty and cheese will become hot before the bread and other garnishes.)

Notes:

Frozen patties – patties may be made ahead, wrapped and frozen until required. For fast thawing, thaw each patty wrapped in greaseproof paper at Defrost (30% power) until patty has thawed in centre. Frozen hamburger buns – wrap each hamburger bun in a paper towel and thaw at Defrost (30% power) for about 1 minute, or until thawed in the centre. Halve with a serrated knife before thawing, so you can see how centre is warming. Do not overheat or bread will toughen.

Pronto Pizza

This pizza is made in a doughnut shape for faster, even cooking.

Its base is made from a quick cheese- and herb-flavoured dough and it browns nicely as it cooks because it is placed on a special "Micro-Crisp" material which acts like a browning dish.

2 servings:

1/2 cup Alison Holst's Baking Mix
or self-raising flour
2 Tbsp parmesan cheese
1/4 Tbsp dried basil
1/4 tsp dried oregano
about 3 Tbsp milk
2 Tbsp Hansells Pasta Tomato Sauce Mix
about 1 Tbsp hot water
1 cup grated cheddar or mozzarella cheese
1-2 cups vegetables e.g. sliced peppers, spring
or mild onion, tomatoes, mushrooms
1 Tbsp oil

1. In a medium to large mixing bowl combine the baking mix or flour, parmesan cheese, dried herbs with enough milk to mix to a firm dough.

2. Roll into a sausage about 40cm long, then join ends to form a circle.

3. Place this on a square of Micro-Crisp, and pat out until it forms a neat flattened doughnut shape about 20cm across.

4. Mix dried tomato sauce mix with enough hot water to make a spreadable paste. Paint this over the surface and outer edges of the uncooked dough.

5. Cook on a ridged surface or flat plate at Full power for 2-3 minutes, until the dough near the centre is no longer spongy. Base will brown as dough cooks.

6. Sprinkle half the grated cheese over the cooked base. Cut, chop or slice the vegetables, toss in the oil, then arrange on the cheese. Sprinkle with remaining cheese. Add garnishes of olives, anchovies, bacon, luncheon sausage, salami or anything you have and like.

7. Cook at Full power for 2-4 minutes until cheese melts. Reheat if necessary, before serving.

Variations:

- Use double the recipe of the pizza base ingredients to form a thicker base, about 23cm in diameter. Cook longer, until dough near centre hole springs back.
- Brush base with water-thinned tomato paste or concentrate, with tomato purée, canned spaghetti and tomato, or other suitable tomato-flavoured mixtures.
- Pat out base on a Teflon liner, or on baking paper, if Micro-Crisp is not available. Base will cook but will not brown.
- Cook flattened dough on a pre-heated browning dish, if desired.

Salad Vegetables

Make one of the salads suggested in other menus in this book, or serve finger-food salad vegetables, e.g. whole tomatoes, young carrots, radishes, peas in pods, crisp inner lettuce leaves, celery strips, cauli-florets etc.

If you are preparing these ahead wash them, shake them dry, then refrigerate them in a large plastic bag closed with a rubber band until you need them.

This will make the vegetables crisp and crunchy.

Munchy Muesli Bars

Muesli bars are made in three separate steps. It is important to cook each stage for the right amount of time, since the finished bars may be too chewy if they are not cooked enough, or too hard and crunchy if they are cooked too long. The times given here are exactly what I use for my 650 watt Toshiba 7900 oven, cooking at Full power. If your oven's wattage is different, you should change the times accordingly.

For 12 gem-iron bars

*about 1/4 cup chopped dried apricots
(or other dried fruit)
2 Tbsp orange juice or water
2 Tbsp honey
1/4 cup brown sugar
3 Tbsp butter
1 1/2 cups rolled oats
1/2 cup coconut
pinch of salt
1/4 cup chopped nuts*

1. Chop the dried apricots (or other dried fruit) into pieces the size of currants, in a small bowl or measuring cup.
2. Add the liquid, toss to coat, cover the container and cook at Full power for 1-2 minutes or until the fruit is hot and steamy, and most of the liquid has disappeared. Leave to stand. The remaining liquid should disappear during this time.
3. Measure slightly rounded measuring spoons of (softened) honey, the brown sugar, and the butter into a flat-bottomed, 20-23cm casserole.
4. Heat for 1 minute, stir well then heat another minute until butter and sugar have melted.
5. Tip in the rolled oats, coconut, salt and nuts.
6. Heat for 2 minutes then stir well, and heat 2-3 minutes longer, stirring well every minute. When mixture is cooked it will have lost its raw smell and will not stick together as readily as it did initially.
7. Stir the softened dried fruit into the hot cereal mixture.
8. Working quickly with the hot mixture, press it together into small lightly buttered moulds, such as patty tins or gem irons.
9. When nearly cold, remove from moulds. Wrap each bar in (airtight) plastic film, or put in an airtight jar.

Notes:

- In Step 3, if preferred, mix and heat the honey, sugar and butter in a bowl or measuring cup, then stir it into the cereal, which has been measured into the large flat-bottomed container.
- If bars are chewy, cook at Step 6 for 30 seconds longer, next time, and make sure storage containers are airtight.
- If bars are too hard, use a little less honey and cook for 15 seconds less next time.
- If bars are crumbly and hard to press together, the mixture has been cooked for too long at Step 6.
- These bars will keep for weeks as long as they are kept airtight.
- Write down the details of the honey, containers, etc. that you used, since variations in these can alter the cooking times needed, and the consistency of the final product.

Variations:

- For dried fruit use: dried apricots, dried apples, dried bananas, currants, sultanas, dates etc.
- For nuts use: peanuts, almonds, walnuts, sunflower seeds, lightly toasted sesame seeds.
- Replace 1/2 cup rolled oats with oat bran or wheat bran, wheatgerm or another cereal, if desired.

Cold Milky Drinks

Make sure that you know what range of ready-to-use yoghurts, milks and flavoured milks are available at your supermarket. Refrigerate these for instant use.

OR make your own milkshakes using a shaker, blender or food-processor, adding "make-a-shake" flavourings and thickeners to milk. Add scoops of ice cream to milk shake mixtures for extra richness and thickness, if you like.

A Picnic In The Sun

When the sun shines, and the air is balmy, nobody wants to sit around inside.

This is the time to think about family food which can be prepared ahead, and eaten outdoors, casually.

Of course you don't have to take a picnic a long distance, to enjoy it.

Depending on the time and transport available, you can enjoy a picnic meal in the privacy of your own garden, in the nearest park, or on a beach or riverbank.

Picnic food should be relaxed and easy, so that the cook hasn't had to spend hours in the kitchen getting food ready.

Your microwave oven does not heat up the kitchen the way conventional stoves do. You can prepare food quickly without getting hot and bothered and without attracting all the flies in the vicinity!

Try to plan a menu of food which doesn't have to be eaten while it is hot, and which is easy to eat and serve in an informal way.

If you prepare the food for a picnic, instead of relying on bought ready-prepared food, you will save a lot of money.

It is a good idea to build up an assortment of disposable picnic containers, buying paper plates, and serviettes and saving containers in which you buy some foods.

If you do this, you can collect up all your used picnic plates etc. in a large plastic bag, and deposit it in the nearest garbage container, so you have only the minimum of dishwashing when you get home.

So, let your microwave oven help you to get outside, more quickly and easily, to enjoy your picnic.

PACK A PICNIC



Scotch Eggs
or
Confetti Meatloaf

Potato Salad

Green Salad with Italian Dressing

Tomatoes

—

Bread Rolls

—

American Brownies

—

Fresh Lemonade

—

Fresh Fruit

Plan of Attack

Before you prepare the food for your picnic, spend a few minutes deciding what you should make first.

Since all of this picnic food will be eaten cold, you don't have to worry about keeping anything hot.

Some foods spoil easily, if they sit around while they are warm. Make spoilable foods early, so you can cool them down before transporting them in an insulated container, with cooler pads if you have them.

The perishable foods in this menu are Scotch Eggs, Confetti Meatloaf and Potato Salad.

1. Make Savoury Crumbs first. These give Confetti Meatloaf and Scotch Eggs a nicely browned surface. Any which are left over may be stored for a few days, for further use.
2. Make Confetti Meatloaf next, because it is fairly large and solid and needs time to cool down.
3. Make Scotch Eggs so that they also have time to cool down. Do not try to hardboil eggs in your microwave oven.
4. Make the dressing for Potato Salad next. Coat the potatoes after they have been cooked. You save time and trouble if you slice the potatoes before cooking them.
5. Prepare the Italian Dressing for the salad, but don't add it to the washed, crisp salad greens, until you are going to serve it.
6. Make American Brownies, and carry them to your picnic in their baking pan, if you like.
7. Prepare and heat the Lemonade concentrate last. Carry it to the picnic in a small container and dilute it with cold water or soda water just before you serve it.

Note: In between and after preparing the foods, assemble containers for transporting, serving, and eating the food, using as many unbreakable, leakproof, and disposable products as possible.



Savoury Crumbs

These crumbs are well coloured and crisp, and are very good for coating microwaved food, to make it look like food which has browned conventionally.

*1 Tbsp butter
2 cups fresh breadcrumbs
1-2 Tbsp chopped parsley or other fresh
herbs (optional)*

1. Melt the butter in a flat-bottomed microwave dish of 20-30cm on Full power for about 30 seconds.
2. Stir in the crumbs, made from stale bread (and herbs if you want green-flecked crumbs).
3. Microwave, uncovered for 2-4 minutes, until the crumbs brown, stirring often once the crumbs change colour.

Note: Crumbs in centre of dish usually brown first. Crumbs become crisp and crunchy when cold.

Variation: Add extra flavour and colour to crumbs by sprinkling them with curry powder, paprika, etc. before cooking.

Scotch Eggs

Microwaved scotch eggs are really easy to cook compared with deep-fried scotch eggs. Cook each one just after you coat it, while you are shaping the next.

For 4 scotch eggs:

*1 cup soft breadcrumbs
1 Tbsp tomato ketchup
2 Tbsp dark soya sauce
1/2 tsp curry powder
450-500g sausagemeat
4 eggs, hardboiled and shelled
1 cup Savoury Crumbs or dry breadcrumbs*

1. Combine the first five ingredients.
2. Divide mixture into four equal parts.
3. Wet your hands to prevent sausagemeat sticking, and pat one portion into a flat patty. Wrap patty around an egg, pinching edges together, so sausagemeat coating is of even thickness.
4. Roll in Savoury Crumbs (or dry breadcrumbs).
5. Place scotch egg in centre of microwave oven on a folded paper towel. Cook on Full power for 1 minute then turn, so bottom is upper-most and cook 1 minute more, or until coating feels firm all over.
6. Repeat with remaining eggs.

Note: Sausagemeat from plastic tube packs gives good results. Some sausagemeat coatings may split during cooking. Try thicker coatings, lower power levels and shorter cooking times.

Confetti Meatloaf

This is a good family loaf. The mixture microwaves especially well and is popular hot or cold.

8-10 servings:

*500g minced beef or pork
450g sausagemeat
1 onion, chopped
1 red pepper, chopped
1 green pepper, chopped
1 tsp curry powder
1 tsp instant green herbs stock
1 tsp instant beef stock
1 egg
1 cup fresh breadcrumbs (about 2 slices bread)
about 1/2 cup Savoury Crumbs or fine, dry breadcrumbs*

1. Mix all except last ingredient.
2. With wet hands, form mixture into a large, sausage shaped roll about 20-25 cm long.
3. Roll in crumbs and place on a flat dish.
4. Stand this on an inverted plate so that the meatloaf is raised from the bottom of the oven. Cook on Medium-high (70% power) for about 20 minutes or until loaf feels evenly firm. Let stand for 5-8 minutes if serving hot, or leave to cool.

Variation: Replace peppers with 1 1/2 cups thawed mixed vegetables and up to 1 cup chopped celery, if desired.

Easy Mayonnaise

This dressing is a cross between old-fashioned boiled dressing and mayonnaise.

*2 Tbsp flour
1/2 tsp salt
1/2 tsp sugar
1/2 tsp dry mustard
or 1 tsp mixed mustard
1/2 cup cold water
1 egg yolk
2 Tbsp vinegar
1/2 cup corn or soya oil*

1. Measure the first four ingredients into a 2-cup measuring jug or a bowl of about the same size.
2. Stir well, then add the water.
3. Microwave at Full power for 2 minutes or until thick and clear.
4. Add remaining ingredients and beat with a rotary beater for a few seconds, until smooth and thick, or tip into a food processor containing the remaining ingredients, and process until smooth and thick.
5. Store in refrigerator in a screw-topped jar, thinning with milk before use, if too thick.

Potato Salad

1. Make Easy Mayonnaise, as above.
2. Scrub new or waxy potatoes allowing 1 large or 2 smaller potatoes per serving.
3. Slice 5mm thick or cut in 1cm cubes.
4. Place in oven bag allowing 1 tsp oil and 1 tsp water per potato then shake to coat potatoes.
5. Secure top of bag loosely with a rubber band, leaving a finger-sized hole.
6. Cook at Full power until potatoes are barely tender, allowing 2-4 minutes per potato.
7. Leave to stand for 2-3 minutes, so potatoes finish cooking.
8. Cool potatoes by holding bag under a cold tap.
9. When cool, add chopped spring onions, parsley, capers, anchovies, chopped hardboiled eggs and enough Easy Mayonnaise to coat. Adjust seasoning only if necessary.
10. Store in a cool place until serving in lettuce cups, or in a bowl lined with lettuce leaves. Garnish if desired.

Note: Hard pieces of potato have not been cooked long enough. Shrunken pieces of potato have been overcooked.

Italian Dressing

(See recipe on page 26)

Green Salad

1. Break a mixture of washed, dried salad greens into tablespoon-sized pieces, in a plastic bag.
2. Add other salad ingredients for added flavour, colour or texture.
3. Close bag tightly with a rubber band, enclosing some air, so vegetables are not squashed together.
4. Chill until required. Just before serving add enough dressing to coat leaves when they are

shaken gently (with some air enclosed in bag during shaking).

5. Tip into serving bowl or place with tongs onto individual (paper) plates.

American Brownies

Brownies are an American favourite. A chocolate slice with a dense fudgy texture, they may appear soft soon after cooking, but become firmer on standing.

Brownies microwave best in a straight-sided flat-bottomed ring pan, without a cover.

*100g butter
2 eggs
1 cup sugar
1 tsp vanilla
¾ cup flour
¼ cup cocoa
1 tsp baking powder
¼-½ cup nuts (optional)*

1. In a medium-sized bowl melt the butter on Full power, for 1½ minutes, or until liquid.
2. Beat in eggs, sugar and vanilla, using a fork or rubber scraper.
3. Fold in sifted dry ingredients and the nuts, if used. Do not overmix.
4. Spoon and spread mixture into a flat-bottomed straight-sided ring pan which has been lined with a Teflon ring liner or baking paper.
5. Microwave uncovered, without raising the dish, on Full power, for 4-7 minutes, until the mixture beside the ring feels dry. Check every 30 seconds after 4 minutes, to make sure brownies do not overcook (the mixture will rise up during cooking and will then sink again).
6. Cool in pan, turn out, remove liner, dust surface with icing sugar, and cut into pieces.

Note: Brownies which are dry and hard have been overcooked. Use them for crumbs for truffles, etc.

Variations: Sprinkle ½ cup chocolate morsels over surface before baking. These sink through brownies during cooking.
For firmer, drier brownies add up to ¼ cup more flour.

Fresh Lemonade

This drink is quickly made and deliciously refreshing. For instant use, make it in a 1-litre jug, then add iceblocks and cold water or soda. For later use, keep and transport in a screw topped bottle, diluting when required. Increase quantities to suit your needs.

4 servings:

*2 lemons, rind and juice
¼ cup sugar
1 cup water
ice*

extra water or soda water

1. Peel lemons thinly with a potato peeler, into a 1-litre jug. Add juice and sugar.
 2. Microwave rind, juice and sugar at Full power for 2 minutes, or until sugar dissolves when stirred.
 3. Stir in the cold water.
 4. Lift out lemon peel, then fill jug with ice and water.
- or Pour liquid over ice in four glasses, and top with water or soda water.
- or Pour liquid into a screw-topped bottle for diluting later.

Casual Weekend Meal for Friends

When you ask friends in for a meal, you don't want to spend a lot of time doing last minute cooking, while everyone else is sitting around talking and laughing in another part of the house.

It's a good idea to plan a meal which doesn't have too many small bits and pieces to think about.

Choose a main dish which can be made ahead so that you can get the "fiddly parts" out of the way when you have no distractions, then reheat it when it suits you.

One of the great advantages of microwave ovens is the way that they reheat food when you want it – in a remarkably short time, without the food drying up or having a "reheated" appearance of flavour.

When you are buying serving dishes, remember the dimensions of your microwave oven and choose dishes to fit. Select dishes without metallic trims or glazes, too.

It is a great help to be able to reheat food and take it straight to the table for serving.

This meal is based on lasagne which is easy to prepare, serve and eat. My version of this popular recipe calls for no precooking of sauces, or precooking of pasta, so it is not nearly as messy or time-consuming as many lasagne recipes.

You can serve this menu to people sitting around a table, or serve it buffet-style indoors or on a patio.

If you have the choice, set your table with pottery rather than fine china.

If you want something to drink with this meal, you can choose from red or white wine, light beer, sparkling fruit juice, or fruit juice diluted with soda water.

CASUAL WEEKEND MEAL



Lazy Lasagne

Green Leafy Salad
with
Italian Dressing and Croutons

Carrot Cake
with
Cream Cheese Icing

for Fresh Fruit

Plan of Attack

If you are cooking this meal at a time when stores are shut, make sure you have all the ingredients you need, ahead of time.

Most of the ingredients in the Lazy Lasagne and Carrot Cake are staples which you should always keep on hand.

If you keep packets of minced beef in your freezer, you can thaw one (in the microwave) and make lasagne whenever you want it.

If you like to cook ahead, you can make both the cake and the lasagne the day before you want to eat them. The cake will not dry out in this time, but you may find it has greenish flecks in it, since the carrot sometimes discolours on standing. It's flavour is not affected, however. If you are cooking closer to serving time, plan your work more carefully.

1. Mix, then cook the Carrot Cake, 1 1/2-2 hours before serving time.

2. While the cake cooks measure out the icing ingredients so you can warm them before the lasagne goes in to cook, and ice the cake later, when it has cooled.

3. Next make the Lazy Lasagne. Its total cooking time is about 45 minutes, then it needs to stand for about half an hour before it is served.

4. Once the lasagne base is cooking, mix the topping ingredients.

5. Mix the dressing while the lasagne cooks, so it is ready to heat briefly when the lasagne topping is firm.

6. Prepare the croutons so they are ready to cook after the other foods.

7. Prepare and chill salad vegetables.

8. Clean up and organise serving and eating area.

9. Reheat lasagne before serving, if necessary, covering it, and using Medium (50% power) level for even heating. Feel the centre of the bottom of the dish to judge hotness.

Note: For faster, easier reheating, microwave individual portions on plates.



Lazy Lasagne

This lasagne requires no precooking of ingredients, so it is very easy to make. You should get out all the ingredients before you start, since the sauce should be warm when it is poured over the noodles. If you work slowly, it cools down.

It is important to start cooking it as soon as you have assembled it, otherwise the noodles may soften.

Lasagne is best made in a square or rectangular container, so it can be served in brick-shaped pieces, but if you only have a round container, use it! This recipe is best made in a 20cm square, or 17 x 23cm dish, with sides at least 3cm high.

About 4 servings:

300-400g minced beef or lamb
1-2 cloves garlic, crushed
1/2 tsp dried basil
1 tsp oregano or marjoram
1 (425g) can tomato purée
2 Tbsp tomato concentrate
1/2 packet (3-4 serving size) tomato soup mix
1 tsp instant beef stock
1 1/4 cups hot water
100g lasagne noodles
2 cups grated cheese
2 tsp cornflour
1 or 2 eggs
3/4 cup milk
paprika

1. Mix the first nine ingredients in a bowl or food processor, until evenly combined.
2. Spray or butter the cooking container (*see above*) and pour a third of the meat mixture into it. (Meat should be sloppy enough to spread easily with a rubber scraper.) Add a little extra hot water if necessary.
3. Cover with half the lasagne noodles, laid in rows, broken into lengths so they cover the meat

evenly (use a few more or less noodles, if necessary).

4. Sprinkle 1/2 cup cheese over the noodles.

5. Repeat these layers using half the remaining meat, the rest of the noodles and another 1/2 cup of cheese.

6. Top with the remaining meat, adding a few tablespoons of extra liquid if it needs to be runnier to spread evenly.

7. Cover container and microwave on Full power for 30 minutes.

8. Mix remaining cheese, cornflour, egg(s) and milk (the mixture will set better if extra egg is used). Pour this over cooked mixture, sprinkle with paprika, cover again, and microwave on Medium (50% power) for 15 minutes or until topping sets.

9. Leave to stand 30 minutes before cutting into rectangles for serving. (If cut earlier, the layers may collapse as served.)

Notes: Reheat whole lasagne, covered, in dish at Medium (50%) or Medium-high (70% power), or reheat individual servings at Full power.

This lasagne is solid when cold. It may be cut, wrapped and frozen in individual portions.

Green Leafy Salad

1. Wash, dry and chill salad greens.
2. Make Italian Dressing (or use any other dressing you like).
3. Make croutons.
4. Toss vegetables with dressing, and sprinkle with croutons, just before serving it.

Choose a mixture of leaves for the salad, if possible, e.g. different types of green and bronze leaved lettuce, watercress leaves, chick-weed, spinach or silver beet leaves, dandelion leaves, fresh herbs. Wash them, shake or blot them dry, and break into bite-sized pieces. Put them in a plastic bag, tie with a rubber band (leaving

some air in the bag so leaves are not flattened) and refrigerate to become crisp and cold.

Italian Dressing

This dressing coats all salad ingredients well because it is thicker than a plain oil and vinegar dressing.

2 Tbsp cornflour
1/2 cup cold water
1/4 small onion, chopped
1 clove garlic
1/4 cup wine vinegar
2 Tbsp tomato sauce
2 tsp sugar
1 tsp salt
1/2 tsp paprika
1/2 tsp oregano or marjoram
1/4-1/2 cup corn or soya oil

1. Mix the cornflour and cold water to a smooth paste in a small bowl or measuring cup.
2. Microwave on Full power for 1 1/2 minutes or until mixture boils and thickens.
3. While it cooks combine all remaining ingredients, except oil, in a food processor or mixing bowl.
4. Process to combine or beat with a whisk.
5. Add oil in a thin stream, while processing or whisking.
6. Store in a cool place, in a bottle with a screw top, shaking before each use

Crisp Croutons

Croutons add interest and flavour contrast to salads and soups.

Although you can make them ahead, storing them in an airtight jar and warming them up 15 minutes before serving, they are best when made within 24 hours of use.

2 Tbsp butter
1 cup small cubes of bread
1/4 tsp garlic salt
paprika (optional)
curry powder (optional)

1. Melt the butter in a flat-bottomed dish, 20-23cm in diameter, on Full power, for about 45 seconds.
2. Cut bread (with crusts on) into 5mm cubes, using a sharp or serrated knife.
3. Toss the cubes in the butter to coat them as evenly as possible.
4. Sprinkle bread with garlic salt, paprika and curry powder for extra flavour and colour, if desired, then spread cubes evenly around the dish.
5. Microwave at Full power for 3-4 minutes, or until lightly browned, stirring after 2 minutes. Remove well browned cubes before others finish cooking, if desired.
6. Store in an airtight container if not using within 30 minutes.

Note: Make more croutons than you need. They have a tendency to vanish before being used, if they are left standing about!

Carrot Cake

This is an excellent microwave cake.

It has good colour, because of its ingredients, and it stays nice and moist for several days, unlike some microwaved cakes which are best eaten very soon after cooking.

I cook this cake in a round-bottomed, smooth surfaced, specially tough plastic pan of 10-12 cup capacity. The pan needs no coating or lining and has a centre cone for even cooking. I cover it with a lid during cooking which ensures even rising, good volume, and no wet or sticky spots on the surface.

I raise the pan about 1cm from the floor of the microwave oven, on an inverted dinner plate, since this helps the bottom of the cake cook evenly.

2 cups finely grated carrot
2 eggs
1 cup sugar
3/4 cup oil
1 tsp vanilla
1 1/4 cups flour
2-3 tsp cinnamon
2-3 tsp mixed spice
1 tsp baking soda
1/2 tsp salt

1. Grate carrots finely and put aside.
2. Mix eggs, sugar, oil, and vanilla in a food processor until smooth.
3. Add carrot and remaining ingredients. (Add larger amounts of spices for a darker, spicier cake.) Process enough to combine everything thoroughly, but do not overmix.
4. Turn mixture into the pan, with the central tube in place.
5. Cover with the lid (or with a paper towel) and microwave at Full power for about 8 minutes or until the top is evenly dry and the cake close to the centre cone springs back when touched lightly.

6. Stand for 2-3 minutes then turn out onto the serving plate, and leave to cool.

Cream Cheese Icing

2 Tbsp cream cheese
1 Tbsp butter
1/2 tsp vanilla
1 1/2 cups sifted icing sugar

1. Put cream cheese, butter and vanilla in a medium-sized bowl.
2. Microwave on Full power for 20-30 seconds until cream cheese and butter are very soft.
3. Add icing sugar and mix with a knife until smooth and creamy. Add a little milk or icing sugar if mixture is too thick or thin. Spread on slightly warm cake.
4. Sprinkle chopped walnuts over icing before it sets.

Note: This cake is best stored, loosely covered, at room temperature or refrigerated in an airtight container. It may sweat if tightly enclosed at room temperature.

Fresh Fruit

Arrange fruit attractively on a bed of fresh leaves, if possible, so it doubles as a table decoration, and an alternative or extra dessert.

Cut grapes into small bunches for easy service and have knives handy to cut fruit, such as pears, if necessary.

Fish for Dinner

When you are planning the main meals for the week, remember that it is important to include a variety of protein-rich foods such as beef, dried beans, cheese, chicken, eggs, fish, lamb, lentils, milk or pork.

With these team a starchy food, e.g. bread, a macaroni product, potatoes or rice, and an interesting selection of fruits and vegetables. You do not always have to serve these on the same plate. Sometimes you may want to move away from the traditional "meat and three veges" pattern.

In this menu, fish is used in the main course. Fish microwaves wonderfully, and very fast. I usually serve the fish on long grain white rice. Instead of serving cooked vegetables with this, I usually make Quick Minestrone Soup, which includes many vegetables, to serve before it, or I make a salad which can be eaten before or after the fish, or at the same time.

You may decide that soup, fish on rice, and salad is enough for you, for dinner. On the other hand, if you are cooking for active, hungry people, or have friends coming to share your meal, you may want to do some quick baking in your microwave. Orange Snacking Cake is a good, quick, microwave cake/slice. For people who don't feel they need a slice of this, you can serve fruit, with a wedge of special cheese. Your microwave can make all the difference to soft cheeses with white, mould-ripened surfaces. If you warm these cheeses before serving, their texture will be soft and creamy. In your microwave, this takes only a matter of seconds.

FISH FOR DINNER



Quick Minestrone Soup

—

Creamy Paprika Fish on Rice

Mixed Salad

—

Orange Snacking Cake and / or Fresh Fruit and Camembert

Plan of Attack

1. Make the Orange Snacking Cake first. It needs about 5 minutes' standing to cool, before you ice it. Mix, cook it, and leave it to stand.

2. Make the soup next. Because this soup uses a lot of ingredients it is not worth making in small quantities. Refrigerate the soup, using it over several days, if necessary.

As the flavour improves on keeping, if you are making it for a special occasion, try to make it early enough to leave standing for several hours.

3. Ice the cake after making the soup.

4. Put the rice on to cook after the cake and soup. You can set the table and prepare the salad while it cooks.

(If you know you are going to be short of preparation time, you may decide to cook the rice earlier in the day, just before you go out of the house, or before you do something in another part of the house. As long as you choose a large container, or a lower power level, to prevent boil-overs, the rice should cook in the time you set on the oven. It can then be heated up, instead of cooked, after the cake and soup are made.)

5. Cook the onion and butter for the fish mixture.

6. Reheat the soup, just before you want to serve it.

7. Cook the fish (with the cooked onion) while you are eating your soup. Warm plates during the fish standing time.

8. Put the cheese in the microwave oven to warm through, while you are eating the fish. This allows standing time before you serve and eat it.



Quick Minestrone Soup

This recipe makes a brightly coloured, well-flavoured soup in a short time.

If you have plenty of time to spare, and want to save money by using dried beans instead of canned beans, soak and cook them until they are really tender, before adding them to this mixture.

The onion, bacon, tomatoes in juice, stock granules and sugar should all be used as a base for the soup. You can, however, change the variety of vegetables and the quantities used, to suit what is available.

The carrots, potato and perciacelli are added earlier in the cooking time because they require more cooking than the raw vegetables which are added next. The canned tomatoes and cooked beans, which need no extra cooking, are added last.

If you are using different vegetables, you should decide when they should be added, according to their cooking time.

If you add other canned vegetables which have been salted, you may find you need less, or even no beef stock.

About 8 servings:

2 Tbsp butter
1 onion, chopped
2 carrots, cubed
2 rashers bacon, chopped
3 cups boiling water
1 potato, cubed
1/4 cup perciacelli
1/2-1 cup chopped zucchini
1/2-1 cup chopped green beans
1 cup chopped cabbage
1 (420g) can tomatoes in juice
1 can (any size) of white, kidney, or mixed cooked beans
2 tsp instant beef stock
1 tsp sugar

1. Combine first four ingredients in a large covered bowl or casserole which holds at least 10-12 cups.
 2. Cover and microwave on Full power for 4 minutes, stirring after 2 minutes.
 3. Add 1 cup boiling water, the potato and perciacelli.
 4. Stir, cover, and cook 5 minutes longer, or until potato is tender.
 5. Add zucchini, beans, cabbage and the tomato juice.
 6. Cover and cook 5 minutes longer.
 7. Add chopped canned tomatoes, the canned beans and their liquid, and the remaining 2 cups boiling water in which are dissolved the instant stock and sugar.
 8. Heat until the soup is very hot, stirring several times for even heating. Leave to stand until needed.
 9. Reheat just before serving.
- Serve with parmesan cheese if desired.

Creamy Paprika Fish

This is a delicious recipe, and may be made with any fresh or frozen, skinless, boneless fish fillets. Try some of the less expensive varieties, experimenting until you find your favourite. Whether the fish is fresh, frozen, or thawed, it should have little or no fishy smell since this indicates that it has been standing around for too long.

You can cube fish while it is frozen or partly thawed, but if you combine it with the other ingredients while it is partly frozen, you will need to allow a longer cooking time.

3-4 servings:

1 large onion, chopped
1 Tbsp butter
500g boneless fish fillets, cubed
1/2 tsp celery salt
2 tsp cornflour
1 tsp paprika

1/2 cup evaporated milk, crème fraîche, or dairy cream

2 spring onions, chopped

1. Put chopped onion and butter into a 20-22cm microwave cooking/serving dish.
2. Cover and microwave on Full power for 3 minutes, stirring once.
3. Add fish cut into 1cm cubes.
4. Sprinkle with celery salt, cornflour and paprika and turn to mix.
5. Add evaporated milk, or cream, and mix again.
6. Cover and cook for 3 minutes, stirring once after 2 minutes. Stand 1 minute before uncovering. Fish is cooked when the pieces are opaque. Cook 1 minute longer if necessary. Before serving sprinkle with extra paprika if desired and top with spring onions.

Variation: After cooking sprinkle with grated cheese before adding extra paprika. Microwave until cheese melts.

Note: If cooked onion is cold when fish and other ingredients are added, the cooking time should be increased by about a minute.

Plain Rice

When you microwave rice you save little time but you finish up with well-flavoured rice which does not need draining, which has not burnt on the bottom or dried out, and which is easy to reheat.

It is worth experimenting with the rice you usually buy, and the dish you want to cook in and serve from, using lower power levels and slightly longer times if the rice has a tendency to boil over.

You can avoid the boiling over problem even at high power levels, if you use a big enough (lidded) container, i.e. about 23cm in diameter,

with fairly straight sides, and a 3-4 litre capacity. In this case, transfer the cooked rice to a smaller container, if you want to serve it at the table. The easiest rice I have cooked is par-boiled or heat-treated rice which is long grained, and yellowish in colour.

The rice with the best flavour is Basmati rice. This rice spoils you for other rices, even though it costs a little more.

4 servings:

1 cup long grain rice

2 tsp butter or oil

1/2 tsp salt or 1 tsp instant stock

2 1/4 cups very hot water

1. Put rice in a fairly deep, 2 litre casserole dish, since it boils up during cooking.
2. Add the butter or oil, the salt or instant stock (any suitable flavour) then pour in the hot water.
3. Stir, cover loosely, leaving lid ajar, and cook on Full power for 12 minutes.
4. Stand for 5-8 minutes, then toss with a fork. To cook ahead, cook as above, then reheat for about 3 minutes.

Variations:

If you have trouble with rice boiling over, cook for longer at a lower power level. Use boiling water, then cook at Defrost (30% power) for 20 minutes, or at Medium (50% power) for 15 minutes.

For 2 cups of rice double everything, use boiling water, and cook 20 minutes. Stand 10 minutes.

Orange Snacking Cake

This cake cooks most evenly in a ring pan. I like to cook it in a ring pan with a flat bottom and straight sides, so that I can ice its rounded, upper surface. Do not expect it to rise very high in the pan.

You can experiment, cooking it in a loaf pan or

a 20 cm square glass pan, but you may well find that you have problems with the outside overcooking before the centre is cooked, even when you cover the whole surface with vented cling wrap.

1 orange, grated rind and juice

1 large egg

1/4 cup sour cream or crème fraîche

50g very soft butter

1/2 cup brown sugar

1 cup plus 2 level Tbsp cake flour or plain flour

1/2 tsp baking soda

1. Microwave the orange for 30 seconds, to make sure you get as much juice as you can, then grate and squeeze it. Reserve 1/2 tsp of the rind for the icing, and put the rest in a bowl. Reserve 1 Tbsp of the juice for the icing and make the rest up to 1/2 cup with water.
2. Combine this with the egg, cream, soft butter and sugar in a bowl or food processor.
3. Mix 5-10 seconds in a food processor, or until barely blended with a rotary beater in the bowl. Add flour and baking soda, and mix until just combined.
4. Turn into a baking paper or Teflon liner lined pan, cover with a lid, or vented cling wrap, and elevate in the oven on an inverted plate.
5. Cook on Medium-high (70% power) for 4-8 minutes or until the mixture is just set near the middle. Uncover immediately and leave to stand for 3-4 minutes.
6. Turn out, cool on a plate for 3-5 minutes longer, then ice.

Icing

2 tsp butter

reserved orange rind and juice

1 cup icing sugar

1. Heat butter, reserved rind and juice for 10 seconds in the microwave.
2. Add icing sugar.
3. Beat until smooth, and add a little more liquid or icing sugar if necessary, for spreading consistency.
4. Spread over the warm or cooled cake.

Warming Soft Cheese

Brie and Camembert, and other white-mould-covered cheeses which have soft, almost runny interiors when ready to eat at room temperature, are too firm and do not have their full flavour, when cold, straight from the refrigerator.

If you want to serve any of these cheeses before they have had time to warm up slowly, unwrap then microwave them for a short time, on their serving plate or board (as long as it has no metal components).

Heat a 125g cheese at Medium-high (70% power) for 30-45 seconds, until slightly warmed right through.

Leave to stand for at least 5 minutes before serving.

Look, No Pots!

This menu is made up of a selection of plainly cooked foods.

The colour and flavour of each food is retained with the brief cooking times involved, and because there are no cooking liquids discarded, flavour and nutrients aren't lost.

This is the sort of meal than an inexperienced cook could make fairly easily.

It could also be made and left for a babysitter to warm up for a child too young to cook for itself. The chicken and vegetables served here are all cooked in disposable containers — paper plates, oven bags, or greaseproof paper packages. The Chocolate Peanut Sauce may be prepared and cooked in the jug from which it is served, or cooked in a “throw away” oven bag — if you want a meal without any cooking containers to wash.

Fresh corn on the cob microwaves superbly and is well worth serving as a course by itself. When it is not available it can be replaced with frozen, halved cobs of corn. This cannot compare with the fresh product, and if used should be served *with* the chicken and other vegetables.

Chicken drumsticks (and thighs) cook so quickly that they do not brown. The coating gives them colour and extra flavour.

Small new potatoes microwave very quickly and tomatoes with their high water content heat very quickly in microwave ovens.

Frozen peas for one or two servings may be thawed and reheated in greaseproof paper packages.

Chocolate Peanut Sauce is child's play in a microwave oven. Use crunchy or smooth peanut butter.

Very hard ice cream may be softened in the microwave oven. Bananas taste especially good with this sauce and vanilla ice cream.

CHILD'S CHICKEN DINNER



Corn on the Cob

Paprika Chicken Drumsticks

New Potatoes

Tomatoes

Frozen Peas

Chocolate Peanut
and
Banana Sundae

Plan of Attack

If you are leaving everything to be reheated later, it doesn't matter what you cook first. I tend to cook the foods as if I was going to serve them straight away, following the basic rules!

- a) Cook foods to be served cold first.
- b) Cook easily reheatable foods next.
- c) Cook dense foods which keep hot longest, next.
- d) Cook foods with short cooking and standing times last.

Here are these rules put into practice:

1. If you serve stewed fruit instead of raw banana, cook it first, and leave it to cool.
2. Prepare and cook the Chocolate Peanut Sauce next, and leave it to be reheated later.
3. Cook the corn on the cob.
4. Cook the Paprika Chicken Drumsticks next.
5. Next, cook the new potatoes.
6. Prepare and cook the peas.
7. Last, cook the tomato which can be put on the serving plate straight away, without waiting for standing time.
8. If the corn is served and eaten first, reheat the plate of chicken, potatoes, peas and tomatoes.
9. If you are serving ice cream from a 2 litre pack, microwave this on Medium (50% power) for 20-30 seconds then leave it to stand until scooping it out, a few minutes later.



Fresh Corn on the Cob

Fresh corn, microwaved in its husk, just as picked, has an amazing flavour and texture, and is one of the most delicious foods you can microwave.

Make sure that the corn is at the correct maturity. When the husk and silk are pulled back 2cm from the top of the cob, the kernels should look plump and tight. When a corn kernel is pierced with a fingernail it should squirt a milky white liquid.

Large, over-mature cobs will be drier, starchier, and not so sweet.

Place a corn cob (exactly as picked, with husk and silk on it) in the microwave oven, so the middle of the cob is in the centre of the oven, with no wrapping or additions.

Microwave at Full power for 2½-3 minutes, depending on size. Leave to stand for 1-2 minutes then cut through the bottom of the cob, about 1cm above the place where the husk is attached, so the husk and silk may be pulled away easily.

Since the cobs are very hot, they are best left for longer than the required standing time, before they are lightly buttered and eaten.

Note: If you have more than three corn cobs, or if you have peeled corn cobs, put them in an oven bag with 1 Tbsp of water per corn cob. Microwave 3-4 minutes per cob. Turn over and rearrange cobs several times during cooking.

Frozen Corn Cobs

Un-thawed corn cobs require about 4-5 minutes per 100g (i.e. per half cob). Wrap in a greaseproof paper parcel, or put in an oven bag, fastened loosely with a rubber band. Add 1 Tbsp water per half cob. Allow 2 minutes' standing time before unwrapping and adding butter (and salt if desired).

Neither the flavour nor texture of this corn compares with that of fresh corn.

Paprika Chicken Drumsticks

This chicken is good served hot, warm, or cold, as finger food. Make the dry coating mixture in fairly large quantities and keep it in an airtight jar, so you can sprinkle it evenly over lightly buttered chicken drumsticks or thighs whenever you want to cook chicken pieces quickly.

2 chicken drumsticks or thighs
2 tsp butter, melted
¼ cup flour
1 Tbsp (bright red) paprika
1 tsp curry powder
1 tsp garlic salt
1 tsp celery salt
2 tsp castor sugar

1. Melt the butter on a paper plate for about 30 seconds on Full power, then brush it thinly and evenly over the thawed, dried chicken pieces.
2. Using a paper towel, remove any leftover butter from the paper plate.
3. Combine the dry ingredients by shaking them together in a small lidded jar (or mix them in a food processor if you want the mixture to keep, without separating, for sometime).

4. Using a sieve to ensure even coating, sprinkle the buttered chicken pieces evenly with the paprika mixture.

5. Place pieces on opposite sides of the paper plate, with the thinner ends of the drumstick nearer the centre, and cover loosely with a paper towel.

6. Cook at Full power for 2-3 minutes per piece (2 minutes per 100g).

7. Leave to stand 2 minutes, then check to see whether chicken is cooked by piercing the flesh almost to the bone, at the thickest part. If juice runs pink, a little more cooking is needed. If juice is clear and yellowish, chicken is cooked.

New Potatoes

New potatoes cook beautifully in a microwave oven.

1. Scrub, scrape, then halve or quarter large potatoes; or peel a ring of skin from around the middle of small whole potatoes (to stop them splitting as they cook).

2. Drop into cold water as they are prepared, to stop browning.

3. Just before cooking, transfer to a covered microwave casserole (for several servings) or oven bag (for 1-2 servings). Add 1 Tbsp water, a mint sprig and ½ tsp butter per serving. Cover casserole dish or close bag loosely, with a rubber band rolled down close to the potatoes. Leave a finger-sized hole so that the bag will not puff up during cooking.

Cook at Full power:

1 serving (100-125g) 2½ minutes

2 servings (200-250g) 3½-4 minutes

4 servings (400-500g) 5½-6 minutes

Shake casserole or turn bag half way through cooking time. Potatoes are cooked when barely tender. Allow standing time of 2-4 minutes, depending on the number of servings.

Note: New potatoes which are still hard should be cooked a little longer. New potatoes which are shrunken have been cooked too long.

Tomatoes

Tomatoes cook very quickly and well. Always pierce skin of whole tomatoes by cutting a cross in the end opposite the stem. This prevents whole tomatoes bursting during cooking. Halve or cut in thick slices if preferred. Cooking times vary with temperature, ripeness and size of tomatoes.

firm red tomatoes
butter
sugar
salt
basil, thyme, spring onions or parsley

1. Halve tomatoes. Place close together, cut side up, in shallow baking dish.
2. Dot each half with $\frac{1}{8}$ tsp butter. Sprinkle with sugar, salt and herbs, if desired.
3. Bake uncovered, on Full power, allowing about $\frac{1}{2}$ minute per tomato, or for 2-4 minutes per 500g tomatoes, depending on size, ripeness and initial temperature.

Frozen Peas

Microwaved frozen peas have very good flavour. Small amounts of frozen peas require less time per serving than large amounts. Cook quantities for one or two servings in a square, flattish steam-proof parcel made using a double layer of greaseproof paper, or in oven bag fastened loosely with a rubber band which has been rolled down so that it is close to the peas which lie evenly in one layer.

For each serving allow:

$\frac{1}{2}$ cup frozen peas
 $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp butter
 $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp water
sprig of mint
pinch of sugar

Allow 1-1 $\frac{1}{2}$ minutes per serving for 1 or 2 servings, and 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ -2 minutes per serving for larger amounts. Shake the container once or twice during cooking time then allow about 1-3 minutes standing time, increasing this with larger quantities.

Chocolate Peanut Sauce

This sauce is very popular with children. After cooking, thin it to the thickness you like with extra milk, remembering that it will thicken as it cools.

If you combine the ingredients in a serving jug, you will eliminate the need for a cooking utensil.

$\frac{3}{4}$ cup ($\frac{1}{2}$ packet) chocolate morsels
 $\frac{1}{4}$ cup smooth or crunchy peanut butter
 $\frac{1}{4}$ cup milk

1. Combine all ingredients in a small bowl or jug. (If crunchy peanut butter is used, sauce has a slightly "crunchy" texture.)
2. Microwave on Medium (50% power) for 2 minutes, then stir until all ingredients are evenly blended.
3. Thin as desired with extra milk.
4. Reheat, if desired, just before use.

Softening Ice cream

Containers of ice cream which have been stored in a freezer may freeze very hard, so the ice cream is too hard to scoop easily. Loosen top of a (2 litre) container, and microwave on Medium (50% power) for 45-60 seconds, depending on hardness.

Chocolate Peanut and Banana Sundae

1. Serve two scoops of ice cream on a flattish plate or oval sundae dish.
2. Halve a peeled banana lengthwise and arrange on either side of ice cream.
3. Pour warm chocolate peanut sauce over ice cream and banana halves.
4. Garnish with chopped roasted peanuts, or with other small colourful fruits or with ice cream wafers.

Traditional Corned Beef Dinner

There are times when the most unconventional cooks think back fondly to some of the meals that their mothers and grandmothers cooked regularly, and served to enthusiastic and hungry family groups, round a large table. Changing life styles and modern cooking methods don't necessarily mean that these meals should be forgotten.

You can, in fact, probably improve on some of them!

Beef used to be salted to preserve it. These days our corned beef is more mildly salted, just enough to give flavour and colour.

Our grandmothers boiled the large chunk of salt beef in a large pot on a coal or wood burning stove. They added, towards the end of cooking time, potatoes, carrots and quartered cabbage. Quite often some of the vegetables were overcooked or undercooked.

Your microwave oven can be used to cook a traditional corned beef dinner. You can produce juicy, tender, lean pink slices of lightly salted meat, potatoes which have been cooked to just the right stage, then mashed to a smooth purée, carrots that are tender but not soggy, and cabbage which is bright green and tender-crisp. You can also make delicious, tangy mustard sauce using some of the cooking stock, adding cream to soften the flavour.

And, to finish off your meal, what about old fashioned crumble, made with whatever fruit is most readily available – or what fruit you like best.

The crust on a microwaved fruit crumble does not brown quite as much as the crust of a conventionally baked crumble, but it has a very good flavour and texture, and can be made in a fraction of the time.

What's more, you can heat up individual servings of fruit crumble with great ease, so you can enjoy leftovers for breakfast or a snack.

TRADITIONAL CORNE BEEF DINNER



Corned Silverside of Beef
with
Mustard Cream Sauce

Mashed Potatoes

Carrots

Buttered Cabbage

Fruit Crumble
with
Ice Cream or Cream

Plan of Attack

What foods do you cook first?

When you are cooking for four or six, follow this order:

1. Soak the corned beef in a large container of plain cold water, an hour before you are to cook it.

2. Make and cook the fruit crumble. If something should go wrong with your timing (and this can happen easily, in families with telephones and/or children!), you can always cook the fruit completely, then cook the crumble topping separately. Sprinkle the topping over the cooked fruit a short time before serving, then reheat the two layers together, briefly.

3. Put the meat on to cook next. A 1 1/2kg piece is a good size to cook, since leftover corned beef is delicious. It needs 30 minutes at Defrost (30% power) per 500g. Time the meat cooking, making sure you leave 30-60 minutes' standing time after the meat finishes cooking. Put the meat on to cook 2-2 1/2 hours before you plan to eat dinner.

Meat Timetable:

– Soak meat 1 hour (in case it is salty)

– Cook 1 1/2kg piece 1 1/2 hours

(1kg piece 1 hour)

– Standing time 1/2-1 hour

4. Cook potatoes, so that there will be time to mash them after their standing time.

5. Prepare and cook the carrots next.

6. Shred and cook the cabbage next.

7. Make the sauce last – or as soon as the meat comes out of the microwave oven, before the potatoes cook.

If you are cooking this dinner for only two people, put the meat to cook first, cook the fruit crumble next, then make the sauce and cook the vegetables. Because the vegetable and crumble cooking times are shorter, you will be able to make and cook them all while the corned beef stands.



Corned Silverside of Beef

When you microwave corned beef, you save time and reduce cooking smells and steam. For best results:

- use silverside rather than brisket
- buy a piece at least 1 1/2kg
- trim off nearly all visible fat before cooking.

*1-1 1/2kg corned silverside
optional seasonings (see below)
2 cups boiling water*

1. Soak the meat in cold water for an hour, if you think there is any chance of it being too salty.
2. Place drained beef in a covered casserole with whatever seasonings you like, or with no seasonings.
3. Pour boiling water over meat (and seasonings).
4. Cover and microwave at Defrost (30% power) for 25-30 minutes per 500g, turning once or twice, during cooking.
5. Leave to stand in hot cooking liquid for at least half an hour, preferably an hour, before slicing.
6. If you are serving meat cold, refrigerate it in a plastic or oven bag, with about 1/2 cup cooking liquid, and with all the air squeezed out of the bag.
7. Slice across the grain of the muscles.

Optional seasonings:

Bayleaf, celery, celery seed, cloves, coriander seeds, dill, dill seeds, garlic, lemon rind, mustard seeds, orange rind, onion, parsley, peppercorns.

Mustard Cream Sauce

This is one of the sauces traditionally served with corned beef.

*2 Tbsp butter
2 Tbsp flour
1 Tbsp mixed mustard
1 cup liquid from meat (diluted if necessary)
2 tsp wine vinegar
2-4 Tbsp crème fraîche, sour cream or top milk*

1. Heat the butter and flour together on Full power for about 1 minute.
2. Stir in the mixed mustard, then 1/2 cup of strained, skimmed cooking liquid from the beef.
3. Heat until mixture bubbles and thickens. Stir until smooth, then taste.
4. Add another 1/2 cup of cooking stock or water, depending on saltiness.
5. Stir in the wine vinegar, then add the cream, tasting after adding 2 Tbsp, and adding extra if you want it to be more bland.

Mashed Potatoes

You can prepare excellent mashed potatoes in a microwave oven as long as you can make sure the potatoes are not undercooked (with hard lumps) or overcooked (shrunken). Take care to cut the potatoes in pieces of even size, and shake them in the cooking container once or twice, to make sure they cook evenly.

4 servings:

*4 medium to large potatoes
1/4 cup water
1 Tbsp butter
milk
salt and pepper (optional)*

1. Choose a covered casserole in which the potatoes can be cooked, mashed and served.
2. Half fill the bowl with cold water, peel the potatoes, cut them in half lengthwise, then cut each half into 4-6 fairly even, fairly square pieces. Drop them into the water, then tip out the water, as soon as potatoes are prepared.
3. Add the measured water and butter.
4. Microwave on Full power for 7-10 minutes, shaking the potatoes after 4 minutes, then when you test them at 7 minutes. (This repositions the potatoes, and coats them evenly with the butter.)
5. Pierce potatoes to see if they are evenly tender – cook until they are.
6. Leave to stand for 4-5 minutes without removing the cover.
7. A short time before potatoes are needed, mash them without removing cooking liquid. Add milk to get potatoes to the correct consistency.
8. Once potatoes are smooth, beat them with a fork to make them fluffy.
9. Taste and adjust seasoning as required. Cover and reheat to serving temperature on Full power, if necessary.

Carrots

Young carrots may be cooked whole, but as carrots mature they are best cut into smaller pieces.

Mature carrots usually microwave best if they are cut into strips thinner than pencils, in slices the thickness of a large coin, or if they are shredded coarsely.

4 servings:

*250-300g carrots, as above
2-4 Tbsp water or corned beef cooking liquid*

1. Prepare carrots as above. Place in dish which carrots almost fill.
2. Add water, using larger quantity if carrots are mature.
3. Cover tightly and cook at Full power, for 5-10 minutes, depending on size of pieces and age of carrots, until carrots are barely tender.
4. Leave to stand for 3-4 minutes, adding a little butter, grated orange rind and/or juice, chopped parsley, honey or whatever you like with your carrots.

Buttered Cabbage

Cabbage microwaves well, with good colour and flavour retention. Cabbage cooked without any added water may be too crisp for some people. Cabbage cooked with a little water (which turns into steam during cooking) has a softer texture.

4 servings:

*about 300g cabbage
2-3 tsp water or corned beef cooking liquid
about 1 tsp butter*

1. Shred cabbage, discarding coarse ribs, but using some of the well-coloured outer leaves.
2. Place in a casserole dish just big enough to hold cabbage or an oven bag, with water or cooking liquid, and butter.
3. Cover casserole, or fasten bag with a rubber band as close to cabbage as possible, leaving a finger-sized hole so that steam can escape during cooking.
4. Cook at Full power 4-5 minutes, until cabbage is wilted, tender, but still bright green.
5. Leave to stand for about 2 minutes, then serve.

Alternative method:

*1-2 tsp butter
1-2 garlic cloves, chopped
1 Tbsp water or corned beef cooking liquid
about 300g shredded cabbage*

1. Put butter and garlic cloves together in a casserole just big enough to hold the cabbage.
2. Cook at Full power for 30 seconds, then add the (hot) liquid and the cabbage and toss to coat leaves.
3. Cover tightly and microwave as above.

Fruit Crumble

Microwaved fruit crumble does not have a browned topping, but it will be crisp, and well flavoured.

When you make a crumble you can choose whatever fruit is in season, e.g. spring – rhubarb
summer – peaches, nectarines
autumn and winter – pears, apples, tamarillos, feijoas, mixtures of above
If the fruit is really tart, put a little sugar with it, or if desired add sugar and cornflour to thicken the fruit.

4-6 servings:

Base:

*4-5 cups sliced raw fruit
sugar and cornflour (optional)
or 3 cups drained cold stewed fruit*

Topping:

*1/2 cup rolled oats
1/2 cup white or brown sugar
1/4 cup wholemeal or plain flour
1 tsp mixed spice
50g cold butter
ground cloves, etc. (optional)*

Prepare the base first

1. Lightly spray or grease a 20-23cm microwave dish with a flat bottom and fairly straight sides.
 2. Prepare and slice the fruit thinly and arrange it in the dish, with sugar, or a sugar and cornflour mixture between the layers of fruit if desired. (The fruit always sinks during cooking.)
 3. Prepare the topping. Combine all the dry ingredients except the cloves in a bowl or food processor. Cut or rub the cold butter into it, until the mixture looks like breadcrumbs.
 4. Sprinkle topping over the cold fruit, and sprinkle the surface with the ground cloves (or any other spice you like) for extra colour, if desired.
 5. Microwave uncovered, at Full power, for 10-12 minutes, or until the fruit base is cooked, and the top is crunchy.
- Serve warm, or reheat before serving.

Hint: Reheat individual servings rather than whole crumble.

Softening Ice cream

Containers of ice cream which have been stored in a freezer may freeze very hard, so the ice cream is too hard to scoop easily. Loosen top of a (2 litre) container, and microwave on Medium (50% power) for 45-60 seconds, depending on hardness.

Pork Stir-Fry Dinner

This is a bright, colourful dinner which you could serve to a group of your friends, without having to spend a lot of time in the kitchen while everybody else is having a good time.

You won't have an oil-spotted cooking surface or baked on toffee-like topping to clean up later either!

Although the tomato soup has the name "fresh" attached to it, you can make it using good quality canned tomatoes in juice.

The stir-fried pork and vegetables makes a good main course. The pork should be left to stand in its marinade for several hours. It may be prepared the night before, and left to marinade in the refrigerator, in the bag in which it will be cooked. Loosen its rubber band before you put it in the microwave oven. Microwave "stir-fries" are worth perfecting if you do not have a large electric fry-pan, or an efficient gas burner and wok.

If you have never microwaved brown rice, you should try it when you make this recipe. Microwaved brown rice cooks in about half the time it takes to cook conventionally.

Upside-down Cake looks so pretty when you turn it out of its ring pan that nobody notices the light coloured bottom surface, characteristic of microwaved cakes.

Choose any fruit or fruit mixture you like for the decorative layer. To stop the sugary coating from sticking to the pan choose a Teflon ring pan liner, a baking-paper ring, or a liner cut from an oven bag. Liners made from Teflon fibre and oven bags may be used many times, so it is worth making sure they fit well. If you do not have a special pan, line the sides and bottom of a 20cm cake pan with a cut-open oven bag, then stand an inverted glass in the centre.

PORK STIR-FRY DINNER



Fresh Tomato Soup
with
CROUTONS

Stir-Fried Pork
with
Vegetables and Cashew Nuts

Brown Rice

Upside-Down Cake

Plan of Attack

In what order should the foods in this menu be cooked?

Work out the order by considering the following points.

- a) Start with food which is to be served cold.
- b) Next, prepare foods which can be reheated.
- c) Cook dense, large foods which cool down slowly, next.
- d) Last, cook delicate foods which are best eaten soon after they are cooked.

By looking through the foods to be cooked for this menu, it is easy to arrange them in a suitable order.

Before you make your final work plan, however, you should read through the actual recipes. In this menu, the pork and vegetables should be cooked last, to keep the vegetables crisp and bright, but the meat should be put to marinate as soon as possible, before anything else is prepared.

1. Start by marinating the pork.
2. Prepare and cook the cake next. It can be served cold, but is nicer if warmed up.
3. Make the soup next.
4. Cook the rice. While it cooks, tidy up, and set the table, etc.
5. Prepare the vegetables, and put them in the casserole dish, ready to cook.
6. When you are ready to eat, reheat the rice, then reheat and serve the soup.
7. Put the vegetables on to cook while you are eating the soup, or just after it. While the vegetables stand, cook the pork, watching it carefully so it cooks for exactly the right time, then combine the vegetables and pork, and serve them on the rice.
8. Warm up the cake while the main course is eaten.



Fresh Tomato Soup

It's nice to come across chunky pieces of skinned tomato when you eat this slightly thickened soup.

3-4 servings:

1 medium onion, very finely chopped
1 clove garlic, chopped
2 Tbsp butter
2 tsp cornflour
1 tsp salt
2 tsp sugar
1/4 tsp paprika
1/2 cup hot water
500g ripe tomatoes, skinned and chopped

1. In a large covered bowl or casserole dish cook the onion and garlic in the butter on Full power for 4 minutes, stirring after 2 minutes.
2. Stir in cornflour, then the next four ingredients.
3. To skin the tomatoes, dip them in boiling water for 20-30 seconds, then run them under a cold tap. Pull off skins. Halve the peeled tomatoes and shake them over the sink to remove any watery juice and seeds, before cutting them into cubes. (Use extra tomatoes if you discard too much liquid and seeds.)
4. Add them to other ingredients, then cook until mixture is clear red, and slightly thickened, stirring several times. This will probably take 6-8 minutes.

Variation:

Replace fresh tomatoes with a 425g can of peeled tomatoes in juice and an extra 1/2 cup of water. Drain the juice into the other ingredients with the water then chop up, and add the tomatoes. Because the canned tomatoes may have been seasoned, use half the salt and sugar listed, adding more after tasting, at the end of the cooking time, if necessary.

Croutons

(See page 14)

Stir-Fried Pork with Vegetables and Cashew Nuts

Use lean thinly sliced pork schnitzels for this recipe. Marinate them first, then take care not to undercook or overcook them, for best texture and tenderness.

4 servings:

500g pork schnitzel
2 cloves garlic, chopped
2 Tbsp corn or soya oil
1 1/2 Tbsp light soya sauce
1 Tbsp sherry
2 tsp brown sugar
1 tsp instant chicken stock
1 Tbsp cornflour
500g sliced quick cooking vegetables
1/4-1/2 cup whole cashew nuts

1. At least half an hour before you intend to serve this stir-fried pork, trim all visible fat and membrane from the schnitzels and cut them into strips no wider than 1cm.
2. Place the strips in an oven bag with the garlic, 2 tsp of the oil, the soya sauce, sherry, sugar, instant stock and cornflour.
3. Knead the bag well to mix the marinade through the meat, squeeze all air from bag, fasten it tightly with a rubber band, and put it aside.
Refrigerate bag of marinated pork if it is to stand for longer than four hours.

4. Remove from refrigerator so meat comes to room temperature before cooking. Knead bag again, spread meat so that it forms a doughnut shape, about 20cm in diameter, and loosen rubber band, so bag has a finger-sized hole for air and steam to escape.

5. If cashew nuts have not been toasted, coat them with a teaspoon of the corn or soya oil and microwave them on Full power until they brown, watching them carefully, removing nuts as they brown. Nuts sometimes do not brown readily, and you may find it faster to brown them in a frying pan or under a grill.

6. A short time before cooking, slice vegetables such as red and green peppers, celery, spring onions, snow peas, broccoli, cauliflower, cabbage, spinach, mushrooms etc. into strips about the same size as schnitzels. Place in a lidded microwave dish 20-23cm in diameter, then toss in remaining oil.

7. Assemble marinated pork, toasted cashew nuts, and oiled vegetables.

8. Microwave covered dish of vegetables at Full power for 3-4 minutes, or until tender crisp, shaking once or twice at intervals. Remove from oven, and leave to stand without removing the lid, while you cook the pork.

9. Cook pork in loosely fastened oven bag on Full power, turning bag and repositioning pork after 2-3 minutes. Cook pork until it loses its pinkness, and take care to remove it from the oven before it overcooks and toughens.

10. Tip the contents of the bag, and cashew nuts into casserole with cooked vegetables, toss to mix, and to coat vegetables, then serve immediately.

Brown Rice

Brown rice has a nutty flavour, a chewier texture and more B vitamins than polished white rice. The microwave cooks it in half the time of conventional cooking, producing a tender result.

4 servings:

1 cup brown rice

1 tsp butter

1/2 tsp salt

or 1 tsp instant stock

2 1/4 cups very hot water

Combine rice with remaining ingredients in a lidded casserole of about 3 litre capacity. Cover and cook at Full power for about 20 minutes, then leave to stand for 10 minutes before uncovering and serving.

Note: Exact cooking times, standing times, and amounts of cooking liquid vary with different brown rices. Experiment, using longer cooking times and more liquid for softer rice. If rice boils over, lower power levels to Medium or Medium-high (50%-70%) after rice boils.

Upside-Down Cake

Choose a pan about 20cm in diameter with fairly straight sides and a flat bottom, if possible. If it does not have a central cone (i.e. if it is not a ring pan), invert a glass in the centre of the pan after lining the pan, since this helps the cake cook more evenly.

Line the bottom and lower sides of the pan with a Teflon liner made for a ring or round pan or a round or ring of baking paper with snipped edges

or an oven bag, cut open flat, trimmed to be square or round, to cover the sides and bottom of a round pan. (Put a glass in pan after lining it.)

Topping:

2 Tbsp butter

2-3 Tbsp golden syrup

peaches, etc

cherries

In measuring cup or in oven bag-lined pan melt the butter at Full power, then stir in syrup, warming mixture if syrup is very cold and hard. Spread evenly over bottom of pan then arrange the fruit of your choice and the cherries over it, remembering that the side of the fruit touching the liner will be uppermost later

75-100g butter

1/2 cup brown sugar

1 tsp vanilla

1/2 tsp cinnamon

1 egg

1-1 1/4 cups flour

1-2 tsp baking powder

about 1/2 cup cooking liquid from fruit,

or fruit juice, or milk

1. Melt the butter in a mixing bowl, using larger amount for a richer cake.

2. Add the sugar, vanilla, cinnamon and egg and beat with a rotary beater until light.

3. Sift the flour and baking powder into the mixture (using the smaller amount for a richer cake). Pour in 1/4 cup of the liquid, for smaller amount of flour, and 1/2 cup liquid for the larger amount of flour, and fold dry ingredients and liquid together, to form a batter which will drop easily off a spoon. Use a little extra liquid if necessary. Take care not to overmix.

4. Pour or spoon the batter over the prepared fruit topping. Cover pan with a paper towel and cook at Full power for 4-6 minutes or until the batter nearest the centre of the dish is set.

5. Leave to stand for 5 minutes, or, if reheating, leave until just before serving, before turning upside down and removing liner etc.

Note: If syrup has soaked into fruit, drizzle over a little more before serving.

Lamb Dinner for Someone Special

This menu is one which may be served when you want a meal which is extra-special! It looks spectacular, and tastes wonderful, but takes only a short time to prepare and cook, when you use your microwave oven. A dinner like this may be prepared ahead, then cooked and served with the minimum of time spent in the kitchen just before the meal. Or it may be prepared and cooked just before it is eaten, by two people working happily together, in an even shorter time!

The rack of lamb, one of the most tender cuts on the lamb carcase, is cooked to perfection in an amazingly short time, in the microwave. It is one of my standbys, and I often serve it to amaze cooks who mistakenly think that their microwave ovens will not cook meat well!

The selection of vegetables shows, yet again, what wonderful colour, flavour, and vitamin retention you get when you microwave them. When new potatoes are in season, I microwave these, very successfully, instead of baking mature potatoes.

Even seasoned microwave cooks are confounded by the individual cheesecakes which cook unbelievably fast, and look and taste so good.

And to finish off on a high note, there is Irish Coffee! What more could you ask?

This whole menu illustrates the way your microwave oven may be used for "gourmet delights", as well as convenience foods.

LAMB DINNER FOR SOMEONE SPECIAL



Herbed Rack of Lamb

Jacket Baked Potatoes

Creamy Pumpkin Cubes

Buttered Broccoli



Cheesecake Tarts

Irish Coffee

Plan of Attack

Where do you start, when you want to cook the whole of a meal like this in your microwave oven?

As in all cooking, you should take a few minutes to work out the most efficient way to work and cook, so you finish up with everything perfect. If you don't do this, you will probably have some foods cold, and others overcooked, and you may even forget about some of the things you meant to do.

Although I have not included a starter course in this menu, you could easily make one. Especially if you have not entertained a great deal, you are best to choose something which can be cooked ahead, and served cold, either informally, or at the table, e.g. chicken liver pâté.

1. Make the Cheesecake Tarts. You can start work on them half an hour before you want to eat, or you can make them the night before.
2. Cook the jacket potatoes next. As long as you sit them in a folded cloth, or in a tea-cosy, or wrap them in foil, you should have no problem keeping them hot for ten minutes after they come out of the microwave oven.
3. Next, cook the rack of lamb. Prepare it while the potatoes cook.
4. While the lamb cooks, prepare the pumpkin. Cook it as soon as the lamb comes out of the oven.
5. Prepare the broccoli while the pumpkin cooks, and cook it while you get the other things ready for serving.
6. It only takes a few minutes to get the Irish Coffee ready, but if you prefer to, get it ready for later reheating at any time when you have something cooking in the microwave oven. Reheat it while you are cleaning things away after the main course. I like to serve coffee with dessert, but you can serve it by itself afterwards, if you want to.



Herbed Rack of Lamb

A rack of lamb is one of the nicest things you can cook in your microwave oven.

A rack of lamb is cut from the front end of the loin. It is made up of the rib chops, joined together. You can usually count about eight ribs in a rack, but you can be precise if you are asking a butcher to prepare it specially for you, asking for a six- or seven-chop rack.

If you are asking for a rack which you want to cook without trimming at all yourself, ask for a chined, frenched rack, with the fell and all the fat coating above the rib-eye muscle removed. You will frequently see racks like this displayed in butchers' shops and supermarkets.

In fact, as long as the rack has been CHINED, (i.e. the knobbly back bone has been removed, so you can carve easily between the rib bones) you can do the rest yourself. Trim the flesh from between the rib bones to french the rack; and run your thumb along above the big rib-eye muscle, then cut the sheet of fat away from the bones to remove it completely.

2 servings:

*1 frenched chined, 6-8 chop rack
1 Tbsp dry or smooth mixed mustard
2-3 tsp dark soya sauce
finely chopped fresh herbs*

1. Place rack, bone side down, on a microwave roasting rack or on a makeshift roasting dish made by inverting a bread and butter plate on a dinner plate.
2. Mix the mustard with enough soya sauce to make a spreadable paste, and brush or rub this evenly over all the meaty surfaces of the rack.
3. Sprinkle the finely chopped herbs evenly over the mustard mixture.

4. Microwave, uncovered, or lightly covered with a paper towel tent, at Full power, for 4-4½ minutes, or until the meat in the middle of the rack springs back when pressed.

The cooking time varies with the size and age of the lamb from which the rack was cut, the initial temperature of the uncooked meat, and the number of chops on the rack.

5. Cover the rack with foil, and leave to stand for 5-10 minutes before carving it. Pour over the pan juices when serving.

Jacket Baked Potatoes

Potatoes which are baked in your microwave oven are especially quick and easy to prepare. They do not have the hard, dried-out skin of conventionally baked potatoes, but the skins are easier to eat.

You should experiment until you become an expert at judging exactly when potatoes are perfectly baked. Potatoes which are hard have not been cooked long enough, and potatoes which are shrunken have been overcooked. Remember the proverb about the carpenter who blames his tools. Do not blame the microwave oven or the potatoes!

Select and scrub evenly-shaped, preferably unblemished potatoes.

Pierce each potato deeply, in several places. Arrange potatoes so they are equidistant, and the same distance from the centre.

Microwave on Full power, allowing 3-5 minutes per potato, turning over once, about half way through the estimated cooking time. The potatoes should "give" slightly all over, when pressed.

Leave to stand in a warm place, for at least 3-4 minutes. The potatoes will continue to cook during this time.

- 1 small potato (100g) 3 min.
- 2 med potatoes (300g) 7-8 min.
- 3 med potatoes (400g) 10 min.
- 4 large potatoes (600-800g) 12-14 min.

Creamy Pumpkin Cubes

In a microwave oven, you can cook raw pumpkin, and the sauce surrounding it, together, without the worry of either burning.

2 servings:

*200g cubed pumpkin
1 tsp flour
1 garlic clove, chopped
¼ tsp curry powder (optional)
pinch salt
2-3 Tbsp cream or creamy milk*

1. Cut pumpkin into 1cm cubes.
2. Place in oven bag with the flour, garlic, and curry powder, and toss to coat.
3. Add salt and liquid, and fasten bag with a rubber band, leaving a finger-sized hole for steam and air to escape. (Because vegetables cook best in a small, confined space, push the rubber band down, close to the pumpkin.)
4. Microwave at Full power for 2-4 minutes, or until the pumpkin feels tender when the bag is squeezed. Move the pumpkin around in the bag half way through the cooking time, for best results.
5. Leave to stand for 1-2 minutes, before serving.

Buttered Broccoli

Broccoli microwaves well. For most even cooking and best colour retention, peel the tough outer skin off the stalks, and cut the stems into small pieces.

Allow about 125g per serving.

1. Cut off the heads, and break or cut them into cherry-sized pieces.
2. Pull the tough outer skin off in strips, starting from the base of each stem. Cut the peeled stems into 1-2cm lengths.
3. Put the prepared stems and heads into an oven bag, as above, or into a small lidded casserole. Add about a teaspoon of water per serving, unless the broccoli is wet from washing.
4. Add 1 tsp butter for 2 servings.
5. Microwave at Full power, for about 1 minute per serving. Broccoli should be bright green, and tender-crisp.
6. Shake, to mix butter through vegetables, then leave to stand for 1 minute, before serving.

Cheesecake Tarts

These are small, rich individual tarts which are cooked in paper cases, and are removed from them before serving. Don't worry if the little tarts look rather odd before you top them with cream. The whipped cream can hide a multitude of sins!

For 8-10 cheesecakes:

2 tsp butter, melted
1/4 cup malt biscuit crumbs
1 egg, lightly beaten
1/2 can sweetened condensed milk
3 Tbsp lemon juice
grated rind of 1/2 lemon

1. Melt the butter in a small bowl, at Full power for about 15 seconds, then stir in crumbs.
2. Press a rounded household teaspoon of crumbs into the bottom of 8-10 paper cupcake liners (large size) standing in microwave cupcake pans, or in cups.
3. In a larger bowl beat the egg, add the condensed milk, juice and rind, and beat to combine.
4. Pour about 3 Tbsp filling onto the crumbs in each case.
5. Microwave at Medium (50% power) for 2-3 minutes for 5-6 tarts, until the filling is set in the centre.
6. Leave to stand in the paper cups for about 5 minutes, then carefully pull away the paper. Decorate with whipped cream and seasonal fruit just before serving.

Irish Coffee

These days almost any whisky-coffee mixture is called Irish coffee, so please yourself when you make it, using strong, freshly made coffee or instant granules. Sweeten the coffee, the cream, or both.

For each cup:

1/2 cup freshly made strong coffee (or 2 tsp instant coffee dissolved in 1/2 cup hot water)
1-2 tsp sugar
1-2 Tbsp whisky
lightly whipped cream

1. Mix all ingredients except cream in microwave-safe mugs or glasses.
2. Microwave at Full power for 45 seconds to 1 minute or until very hot. Stir to dissolve sugar.
3. Just before serving, carefully pour whipped cream onto the surface of each cup. Drink without stirring.

To Warm Plates

Hot plates are important, especially for lamb. Between each plate put a wet paper towel and heat on Full power for 1/2-1 minute per plate, or until plates are hot.

Winter Festive Dinner

Most of us, when preparing a special occasion dinner, use our microwave ovens with our regular cook-top and conventional oven. You may choose to cook some of the foods for this menu on your cook-top or in the oven, but if you want to, you can cook everything in your microwave oven as long as you are not cooking for too many people.

Many of us like to work a few hours ahead for a dinner like this, and a microwave oven makes it possible by cooking the different dishes, then transferring them to serving dishes which can be reheated. Just before serving, the prepared food can be reheated in the microwave oven, without overheating the dish, and can then go straight to the table.

Spiced apple juice or buttered rum can be heated in serving mugs. Nachos can be cooked and passed around on the same dish.

The cooked chicken can be arranged attractively with its garnishes around it on a serving platter, covered, then given a few minutes in the microwave to reheat. (The people who want seconds can be sure of hot food, too.)

The Garlic Mushroom Sauce, Scalloped Potatoes and Julienne Vegetable Strips may all be reheated in their serving dishes. You'd never know this, when you come to eat them!

Individual Bread Puddings may be made hours ahead, for reheating when you want them. Another microwave bonus – when you come to do the washing up, you will find that you have no burnt or baked-on food to clean off cooking utensils – a real bonus at the end of a party.

FESTIVE DINNER FOR SIX



Hot Spiced Apple Juice
or

Buttered Rum

Cheesy Nachos

Marinated Grand Poulet
with

Forcemeat Balls

and

Bacon Curls

Garlic Mushroom Sauce

Scalloped Potatoes

Julienne Vegetable Strips

Rich Bread Pudding
with

Whisky Sauce

or

Fresh Fruit Salad

with

Cream, Yoghurt, or Ice cream

Plan of Attack

When you plan a festive meal like this, you should organise most of the actual cooking ahead of time, so that you can use the microwave oven for efficient reheating, rather than cooking, just before the meal.

1. Make the Bread Pudding, and its sauce, first. It will reheat well, between courses.
2. Get the Scalloped Potatoes out of the way, next.
3. Work out the time when you should put the Grand Poulet on to cook. A 2½kg bird cooks for 10 minutes per 500g at Medium - high (70% power) – that is 50 minutes. Allow 30 minutes' standing time after cooking. To give yourself time to spare, prepare the bird about two hours before you want to serve it, and put it in to cook 1½-1¾ hours before you want to serve it. Prepare and cook the Forcemeat Balls and the Bacon Curls before the chicken goes into cook.
4. While the chicken cooks, prepare the mushrooms and Julienne Vegetable Strips, and then the pre-dinner drinks. You can assemble the Spiced Apple Juice in individual mugs or glasses, ready for later reheating.
5. When the chicken comes out of the microwave oven, drain off the cooking liquid and cook the mushrooms in it, thickening it as soon as it boils.
6. Next, cook the Julienne Vegetable Strips.
7. Once the vegetables are cooking, prepare the nachos. You can sprinkle cheese over them at this stage, but don't add sauce until you reheat them.
8. Heat the drinks and Cheesy Nachos when guests arrive.
9. Heat the dinner plates after this.
10. Reheat the potatoes, the chicken and its accompaniments, and the vegetables, just before your meal.
11. Reheat the pudding while you eat your main course.



Hot Spiced Apple Juice

This makes a lovely warming drink for any cold evening.

Hunt around for the apple juice you like best. There are many to choose from – my favourites are Crisp Apple Juice and Robinson Brothers Natural Apple Juice.

If possible, choose clear mugs that are microwaveable. Although you can use china mugs, it is nice to be able to see the colour of the juice. If you choose glass beakers in holders, make sure the holders are plastic, not metal. Make these drinks large, rather than small – you should be able to warm your hands around the mug. Don't forget to serve each mug with a paper serviette – some people have more heat-tender hands than others.

1. In each mug put

1 cup apple juice

2-3 cloves

1 or 2 orange or lemon slices

and/or lemon or orange rind

1 long cinnamon stick

2. Use the cinnamon stick to stir the juice before and after microwaving.
3. Arrange the filled mugs in a circle around the edge of the microwave turntable (or on a microwaveable tray on the turntable).
4. Microwave on Full power, allowing 2 minutes for every 250ml cup of juice used, or until the juice is hot drinking temperature (not boiling).

Hot Buttered Apple Juice

Although the idea of adding butter to hot fruit juice may seem rather odd, I hope you will try it, because it gives a wonderful mellowness to the drink.

Pass around a dish with small cubes, or small butterballs of butter, when you pass the drinks. Let guests add one or two cubes or butterballs to their mug of Hot Spiced Apple Juice and stir well, before they drink it.

Hot Buttered Rum

This is a traditional American winter drink that is wonderfully warming, and is often served before cold weather festive meals.

1. Prepare and heat Hot Spiced Apple Juice, according to the recipe.
2. To each mug of hot spiced juice add

2-4 Tbsp dark rum

1/2-1 tsp butter

Either add this in the kitchen, before bringing drinks in, or add it at a side table in the room where drinks will be served.

Note: Cinnamon sticks may be washed in very hot water after use, and dried again for reuse, if desired.

Cheesy Nachos

These savouries should be heated just before they are required, and served immediately. I find it best to prepare two plates of corn chips a little ahead of time. I heat one, and pass it around, then replenish it back in the kitchen, while I am warming the second plate in the microwave.

Working like this, it is possible to have a constant supply of nachos to take through to guests.

1. Spread 20-30 corn chips in one layer on a decorative paper plate (to save washing up later!) or on a flat plate (without metallic

decoration).

2. Sprinkle chips with any grated cheese you like, using about 1 cup altogether.

3. In a separate, small shallow bowl mix together:

1/2 tsp tabasco or other hot pepper sauce

1/2 tsp salt

1 tsp wine vinegar

1 tsp water

4. Just before cooking the nachos, sprinkle this over them.
5. Microwave at Medium (50% power) for 1 1/2-3 minutes, until the cheese starts to melt. **DO NOT OVERCOOK** or cheese melts too much and runs off the corn chips and they toughen.

Variation:

Spinkle corn chips with Taco Sauce instead of seasoning mixture, if desired.

Savoury Crumbs

These easy-to-make crumbs are well coloured, crisp and are excellent for coating microwaved food, to make it appear as though it has been cooked conventionally.

1 Tbsp butter

2 cups fresh breadcrumbs

1-2 Tbsp chopped parsley or other fresh herbs (optional)

1. Melt the butter in a flat-bottomed microwave dish, 20-30cm diameter, on Full power for about 30 seconds.
2. Stir in the crumbs, made from stale bread, and the herbs.
3. Microwave, uncovered for 2-4 minutes, until the crumbs brown, stirring often, once the crumbs change colour.

Note: The crumbs in the centre of the dish usually brown first. Crumbs become crisp and crunchy when cold.

Marinated Grand Poulet

The skin of this large, tender chicken browns beautifully as it cooks, if it is left to stand in the oven bag in which it will cook, in its marinade, for an hour or longer before cooking.

Note: If you are using a frozen Grand Poulet, place it in the oven bag with the marinade before it has thawed, turning it over, at intervals.

2 Tbsp dark soya sauce
2 Tbsp sherry
2 Tbsp Worcestershire sauce
1 Tbsp honey
2 cloves garlic, crushed or chopped

1. Mix marinade ingredients in an unpunctured oven bag. If necessary, heat marinade in bag to soften and dissolve honey.
2. Add Grand Poulet to bag with marinade, and remove air from bag so marinade surrounds chicken. Fasten with rubber band. Turn occasionally. Leave to stand for at least an hour, but longer if desired.
3. Before cooking, loosen rubber band, leaving a finger-sized hole so steam can escape during cooking.
4. Microwave on Medium-high (70% power), allowing 10 minutes per 500g, turning chicken several times during cooking for most even results and best colour.
5. After standing for 10 minutes, the flesh between leg and breast should no longer look pink, and juice from the pierced thigh should run clear, not pink.
6. After cooking, pour off marinade to use for sauce, etc. and leave bird in bag, covered with a cloth, or foil, to keep it hot. Turn several times while it stands.

To serve garnished Grand Poulet:

Remove Grand Poulet from bag not long before serving, and arrange on a microwave-proof serving platter with the forcemeat balls and bacon curls.

Cover with plastic film (or another large oven bag) and heat through just before serving, if necessary.

The time needed to reheat will depend on the temperature of the bird. Use Medium-high (70% power) if possible (but Full power if time is short).

Forcemeat Balls

If you like stuffing, make these little balls to serve with microwaved chicken.

If you are not using the microwave oven for other things, you can make them while the chicken cooks, and cook them during the chicken's standing time.

If you are planning to cook other vegetables after the chicken cooks, prepare and microwave these before the chicken goes into the microwave oven.

450-500g sausagemeat
1/2 cup soft breadcrumbs
1/2 cup crushed pineapple
1 onion, finely chopped
2 Tbsp chopped parsley
1 tsp fresh thyme
1/2 tsp salt
Savoury Crumbs, or fine dry crumbs

1. Mix first seven ingredients until well blended.
2. Form into 12-16 balls with wet hands, and roll in Savoury or dry crumbs.
3. Arrange in a circle around the edge of a flat plate or the microwave turntable.
4. Microwave on Full power for 5 minutes, or until firm, turning them over once, if desired.

Variation:

Replace crushed pineapple with any other small pieces of ripe, or cooked fruit, e.g. apple, peach, tamarillo, cranberries, feijoas etc.

Bacon Curls

Bacon curls look pretty and taste good with any roast chicken.

1. Cut the rind from side bacon.
2. Cut the bacon into strips 5-8cm long.
3. Roll up each strip and fasten with a toothpick.
4. Arrange rolls in a circle on a flat plate, cover loosely with a paper towel and microwave on Full power until the bacon looks cooked, from 1-2 minutes for six curls.
5. Put aside, to reheat later, if necessary.
6. Remove toothpicks before arranging around chicken on serving plate.

Microwaving Whole Chickens

Chickens cook well and quickly in microwave ovens.

Defrosting:

Defrost chickens at very low (i.e. 20% or 30%) power levels for about 30 minutes. Always defrost frozen chickens before cooking them at higher power levels.

Remove commercial wrappings and metal clips. Place bird in a bag (unless using automatic function and other instructions). During thawing, turn chicken, pour off accumulating liquid, loosen joints, remove giblets and internal ice, and mask with small pieces of foil any parts that are overcooking. After thawing, centre should be cold but not icy.

Note: Microwave defrosting is convenient when time is limited. When possible, however, thaw chicken at room temperature for several hours, or in the refrigerator overnight. For chicken which will be marinated before cooking, thaw in marinade, if desired.

Coatings and Marinades:

Because chicken skin does not brown much during cooking, it is usually coated with a mixture which will add colour as well as flavour.

Bags and Covers:

Whole chickens cook more quickly, and more evenly, if they are enclosed in an oven bag as they cook.

Oven bags produce excellent results, with the chicken skin losing its “steamed” appearance soon after it is removed from the bag after cooking. When microwaving chickens, uncovered, you should cover them loosely with a tent of baking paper or greaseproof paper, since this helps the bird cook more evenly and quickly.

Garlic Mushroom Sauce

Mushrooms, cooked in a sauce of chicken-cooking liquid make both an interesting vegetable, and a sauce to serve with the chicken.

6 servings:

*400g firm button mushrooms
1/4 cup chopped spring onions
chicken-cooking liquid
white or red wine
or water with 2 Tbsp sherry
about 1 Tbsp cornflour
1/4 cup extra wine or water*

1. Wash or wipe the mushrooms gently, cut off any long stems, and halve or quarter large buttons.
2. Chop the spring onions, and put aside with the mushrooms until required.

3. Strain the cooking liquid from the Grand Poulet, skim, and discard most of the fat.
4. Make the liquid up to 1 cup with wine or water-sherry mixture.
5. Combine mushrooms, spring onions and cooking liquid in a bowl in which the sauce can be served.
6. Cover with a lid or plastic film, and heat at Full power until the liquid boils evenly, stirring every minute. Cooking time should be 1-4 minutes, depending on the temperature of the liquid.
7. Mix cornflour to a smooth paste with the extra wine (or water).
8. Stir cornflour mixture into hot mushrooms and sauce, stopping when the sauce thickens to desired consistency. Put aside and reheat before serving.

To serve: Use a ladle to serve both sauce and mushrooms.

Scalloped Potatoes

Because everybody likes Scalloped Potatoes, you should make plenty!

Allow a large potato and half a medium-sized onion per person. Choose a wide shallow dish, 23-25cm in diameter, rather than a deep one with a small surface area, so that there is room for plenty of the cheesy topping.

6 servings:

*6 large potatoes
3 medium or 2 large onions
1 1/2-2 Tbsp butter
3 Tbsp water
3 Tbsp flour
flavoured salt
1 1/2 cups milk
about 1 cup grated cheese
parsley and paprika*

1. Scrub the potatoes, or peel them thinly, then cut them in 5mm slices. Peel and slice the onions thinly into rings.
2. Arrange layers of sliced potato and onion in the dish.
3. Dot the butter over the potatoes, and sprinkle the water over the surface.
4. Cover tightly, and cook at Full power for 12-15 minutes, or until potatoes are barely tender, stirring or shaking, to move the potatoes around, at least once during this time.
5. Sprinkle half the flour over the potatoes, then turn or shake the potatoes to mix the flour through them. Add remaining flour, and turn potatoes again.
6. Sprinkle celery or garlic salt over the potatoes if desired. Pour the milk over the potatoes, cover loosely (since loose covering prevents rapid boil-overs) and heat until the milk mixture boils vigorously, and seems evenly thickened.
7. Spread the grated cheese, then the paprika evenly over the surface, then add the chopped parsley.
8. Microwave again, uncovered, until the cheese melts into the paprika, forming a golden-brown coating, flecked with parsley. This should happen in about a minute if the potato mixture is still hot, but will take up to 5 minutes if the potatoes have cooled down before the topping is added.

Note: To neaten the edges of the dish for serving, run a rubber spatula around it before and/or after adding and cooking the cheese coating.

To Warm Plates

Hot plates are important. Between each plate put a wet paper towel and heat on Full Power for 1/2-1 minute per plate, or until plates are hot.

Julienne Vegetable Strips

Long thin strips of vegetables look attractive and cook quickly together in the microwave oven. The strips should be thicker than matches but thinner than pencils.

Cut vegetables with longer cooking times (like carrots) into the thinnest strips.

Alter varieties of vegetables, but use a colourful mixture. Include red, green and yellow peppers, and yellow zucchini for colour, if desired.

6 servings:

150g carrots
150g zucchini
150g celery
1 Tbsp butter
1/4 cup water
2 finely chopped garlic cloves (optional)
3-4 Tbsp chopped parsley or a fresh herb mixture

1. Cut carrots, zucchini, celery or other vegetables into thin strips, making the carrot strips the thinnest, if carrots are fairly mature.
2. Put vegetable strips with butter, water and garlic into a microwave cassérole.
3. Cover and cook on Full power for 4-6 minutes, or until barely tender, shaking vegetables to coat with butter, after 2 minutes.
4. Leave to stand for 2 minutes, then sprinkle with finely chopped parsley or other fresh herbs.

Rich Bread Pudding

I hope that you will not be put off this pudding by its name or rather plain appearance!

It is not the same plain pudding that your mother used to make, but an interesting rich recipe from New Orleans, modified to cook quickly in the microwave oven!

If you become addicted to it, try variations of the sauce, making it with dark rum, whisky, brandy or bourbon, at different times.

4 large or 6 small servings:

25g butter
75g very dry bread (2 bread rolls)
1/2-3/4 cup milk
1/4-1/2 cup cream
1/2 cup brown or white sugar
1-2 eggs
1 egg white
1 tsp vanilla
1/4 cup sultanas or currants
1/4 cup walnuts or almonds
1/4 tsp cinnamon
1/4 tsp mixed spice
1/4 tsp grated nutmeg

1. In a large bowl, melt the butter at Full power for 1-2 minutes, or until liquid.
 2. Add bread (with crusts) broken into small pieces. (The pudding will be nicer if bread is stale. If bread is fresh use the second egg.)
 3. Stir in a total of 1 cup of a mixture of the milk and cream, the sugar, egg(s), egg white and the vanilla. Press the mixture to soften the bread, then beat with a fork to combine. Do not break up all pieces of bread.
 4. Add fruit, nuts and spices, and mix again. (The mixture should be firm enough to hold a rounded shape in a tablespoon or when put in individual dishes). Add extra milk or bread if necessary, then spoon into 6 small ramekins.
 5. Sprinkle surface with one of the spices used in the pudding. Decorate surface with chopped candied cherries if desired.
 6. Arrange dishes in a circle around the edge of the microwave turntable. Microwave, uncovered, at Medium (50% power) for 8-10 minutes or until firm.
- Pour sauce over individual puddings when serving.

Whisky Sauce

50g butter
3/4 cup icing sugar
1 egg yolk
3 Tbsp whisky or rum

1. In a medium-sized bowl melt the butter on Full power for 1 minute, or until liquid and hot.
2. Beat in the icing sugar and egg yolk.
3. Microwave for 30 seconds, or until the liquid bubbles around the edges.
4. Cool, then stir in whisky.

Notes: If you like a lot of sauce, make double quantity. Put the extra egg white into the pudding.

If second egg is added to a stale bread mixture the pudding will set more quickly, and more firmly.

Replace whisky with bourbon, rum or brandy, if preferred.

Fresh Fruit Salad

If you decide that you prefer a lighter dessert, serve a fresh fruit salad, in an interesting microwaved syrup, by itself or with yoghurt, crème fraîche, double cream, whipped cream or ice cream.

6 servings:

2 oranges
2 Tbsp honey
1/4 tsp vanilla essence
2 Tbsp brandy
1 or 2 kiwifruit
1 or 2 bananas
1/2 or 1 pineapple
1 medium melon
1 or 2 ripe pears
about 24 grapes

1. Squeeze the juice of one orange.
2. Heat it with the honey, at Full power, for about 1 minute, or until the honey melts and mixes with the juice.
3. Pour into the serving dish, and add the vanilla and brandy.
4. Prepare the selected fruit, removing seeds, pith etc and cut it into neat, evenly-sized 2cm cubes. Toss in the syrup. Add remaining fruit. Turn gently to coat.
5. Cover container with plastic film to prevent drying out and transfer of flavours.

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